

Groups and Resources

Lib ED contacts

Leicester 0455-209029
Bristol 0272-778453 NOTE NEW NUMBER
Nottingham 0949-60306 (distribution and subs)

Education Now

PO Box 186, Ticknall, Derbyshire

Summerhill School

Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY

Trust for Research and Education on the Arms Trade

11 Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ
(linked with Campaign against the Arms Trade)

Peace Education Project

Peace Pledge Union, 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1
071-387 5501

Buktu Resource Project

136 Grosvenor Road, Bristol BS2 8YA

Kirkdale Free School Project

c/o 11 Veronica Road, London SW17
081-675 4388

Liberation Network of People with Disabilities

c/o Townsend House, Green Lanes, Marshfield, Chippenham, Wilts.

National Union of Students

461 Holloway Road, London N7
071-272 8900

Letterbox Library

8 Bradbury Street, London N16 8JN
071-254 1640
(Specialises in non-sexist and multi-cultural books for children. For details of their free catalogue, write or phone)

Forest School Camps

Lorna English (Secretary), 110 Burbage Road, London SE24 9HD
(An organisation that arranges camps for children -- it's very decentralised)

Woodcraft Folk

13 Ritherton Road, London SW17
081-672 6031
(A kind of non-sexist, non-militarist scouts and brownies)

Education Otherwise

25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs.
(For everyone who practices or supports the right of children to learn without schooling)

The Children's Home-Based Education Association

14 Basil Avenue, Armthorpe, Doncaster, DN3 2AT
0302-833596

Campaign Against Military Research On Campus (CAMROC)

190 Burdett Road, London E3 4AA
081-980 2455

New Education Directory

15 Bellevue, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1DB
0272-735091

Shocking Pink

Young Women's Magazine Collective, c/o 23 Tunstall Rd, Brixton London, SW9 8BZ
(A 4 issue sub to this excellent magazine costs £2.40)

All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism

Panther House, Room 216, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1

Bread'n'Roses/Tenants Corner

46a Oval Mansions, Vauxhall St., London SE11
071-582 7286
(housing & education resource centre run by tenants)

Scottish Civil Liberty Trust

146 Holland Street, Glasgow G2 4NG
(Provides legal information and has published a series of leaflets aimed at young people in Scotland)

Children's Legal Centre

20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN
071-359 6251

Hummingbird Multicultural Resources

24 Ashley Hill, Bristol BS6 4JG
0272-541946
(publish mail order catalogue of books and other resources)

Advisory Centre for Education

18 Victoria Park Square, London E2
081-980 4596

Minority Rights Group

29 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG
071-930 6659

Third World Publications

151 Stratford Road, Birmingham B11 1RD
021-773 6572

Commonweal Collection

c/o J.B.Priestley Library, University of Bradford, Bradford BD7 1DP
(A small library designed for anyone interested in libertarian, anarchist and pacifist ideas)

Z to A Project (New University)

24 South Road, Hockley, Birmingham B18
021-551 1679
(An alternative education project)

Black and In Care

20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN
071-226 7102

Teachers for Animal Rights

c/o Wanda Dejliko, 29 Lynwood Road, London SW17 8SB

End Physical Punishment of Children (EPOCH)

PO Box 962, London N22 4UX
(A national organisation which aims to end physical punishment of children by parents and other carers)

National Union of Teachers

Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1
071-388 6191

Lesbian and Gay Workers in Education

BM Gayteacher, London WC1N 3XX

A K Distribution

3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, FK8 2RD
(Suppliers of a wide range of libertarian literature by post: send for their catalogue of titles)

Global Futures Project

Institute of Education, University of London, 10 Woburn Square, London, WC1H 0NS

Kilquhanity House School

Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland

University of the Third Age

Wren Street, London WC1
071-833 4747
(Self-help learning groups for older people)

Blackcurrent Otherwise Project

please write c/o Lib ED for redirection.

Skool Bus Project

24 Clive Street, Hereford, HR1 2SB

Feminist Library

5/5a Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1

International

The Children's Village School

Tombol, Wangdong, Amphoe, Muang, Kanchanaburi, 71190, Thailand

National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools

58 Schoolhouse Rd, Summertown, TN38483, USA
tel:615 964-3670

City as School

16 Clarkson Street, New York, NY 10014, USA

Foundation of Education with Production

PO Box 20906, Gaborone, Botswana
(Education for social change)

ANKUR

J-21, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi 110016, India
tel:661473
(Society for alternatives in education)

Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Vidyalaya

Sawai Ram Singh Road, Jaipur-302 004, India

Tamariki Free School

Woolston, Christchurch, New Zealand

New Zealand Lib ED group

c/o Richard Bolstad, 26 Southampton Street, Christchurch, New Zealand

SAC (Syndikalisterna)

Svenvagen 98, 113 50 Stockholm, Sweden
tel:08-34-35-59

KRUT (Kritisk UtbildningsTidskrift)

Torpedverkstaden, Skeppsholmen, S111 49 Stockholm, Sweden
(Critical Journal of Education)

Frankfurt Free School

Vogelweidstrasse 3, Frankfurt, W. Germany

Familial, Day Nursery Kindergarten School

PO Box 2009, Kathmandu, Nepal

Grupo Impulso Libertario

CC984, 2000 Rosario, Argentina

Le CERISE

77 rue des Haies, 75020 Paris, France
(Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur l'Innovation Sociale et Educative, which publishes the journal "Zero de Conduite")

Graine d'Ecole

La Paillerie, Avenue de Bardenac, 33600 PESSAC, France

Circule-Air

Agence Informations Enfance, 29 rue Davy, 75017 Paris, France
tel: (1) 42-28-71-64
(an alternative education organisation and magazine)

Assn. Nationale pour l'Education Nouvelle

1 rue des Neffiers, 31400 Toulouse, France
tel: 61-52-45-10

Connect

12 Brooke St., Northcote 3070, Victoria, Australia

Acrobatic Arts Community School

PO Box 1101, Wodonga 3690, Australia

Centro Studi Libertari

via Rovetta 27, 20127 Milano, Italy
(Libertarian study centre and archive which publishes the journal "Volonta")

CNT-AIT-Ensenyament

Calle Unio 16, 1-1, Barcelona, 08001, Spain
tel: 301-06-12

CNT-Federacio d'Ensenyament de Catalunya

c/Roger de Lluria, 123 pral, 08037 Barcelona, Spain
tel: 215-7625 (English spoken Tuesday mornings)
(They publish "Alternative Teacher" (in English), news for foreign language teachers.)

De Weide Free School

Sevekootstraat 67, Erpe-mere, Nr. Aalst, Belgium

Free Schools in Vienna

c/o Davidgasse 6/15, 1100 Vienna, Austria

Lib ED

No.16 Summer 1991 £1

A magazine for the liberation of learning

SUMMERHILL SCHOOL

Where kids really are a
law unto themselves

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

What could be better

BOOKS, MUSIC, DRAMA

It's all in here!

Libertarian EDUCATION

A magazine for the liberation of learning

Vol 2 No 16 Summer 1991

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Cover photo: courtesy of Summerhill School

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EDITORIAL

AS WE have often said, we are living in interesting times. But sometimes one wonders whether we could do with a little less interest. The advent of The Man Who Tucks His Shirt Into His Underpants promised an uncontroversial grey time for us all, with a slow lapse into the shabby decay so beloved of the English.

But the momentum of the Thatcher Years has continued, and the number of controversies has multiplied. In the last few weeks we have had the privatisation of FE colleges, the Royal Speech, testing for 7-year-olds, the Major 'O' levels, new wage bargaining arrangements for teachers, opt-out schools being allowed to become selective, a well-known 'progressive' primary school, Culloden, in Tower Hamlets being hauled over the coals by the Inspectorate, the list goes on...

From an editorial point of view, it's hard to know where to start, but perhaps it's worth pulling back a little. What Britain has lacked, and what we desperately need is a sense of strategy. What are our long term goals? What do we actually want from education?

We can actually give a fairly simple answer. That learners, of whatever age, should be able to have access to the education that they want, and that this education should be adequately resourced.

It would help further if it were generally recognised that education is a Good Thing, and that one of its purposes is to enable children to grow into whole responsible adults, rather than trained to be narrow-minded morons. Companies should be persuaded, through the tax system, to offer decent training to their workers (and this might start with some decent management training for the Captain Bob's of Industry)

The English have always had a curious attitude to education, well illustrated by the hypocrisy of a lot of the discussion about the Major 'O' levels. Snobbery about his lack of formal academic achievement has reared its ugly head, even from some liberals or members of the Labour Party who should know better.

Yet at the end of it all it is Major himself who raises the old cry that intellectuals are remote people with no common sense, and nothing to offer the world. The suspicion that some people are just too clever for their own good. You would not hear that in Scotland, let alone the greatest flatterer of scholarly egos, France. Respect for learning, not necessarily formal learning, is something that is well-known North of the border. Perhaps we could learn a little from them.

The Royal Speech provided us with the spectacle of the unbelievable in search of the irrelevant. It isn't Charles' fault that he has had such a sheltered remote life. It doesn't prevent him from saying some good things sometimes, in this case about the under-resourcing of schools and the low morale of teachers under stress.

But inevitably the headlines concentrated on the issue of 'standards', and provided another opportunity for the government to attack the 'Education Industry'. Now don't get us wrong. We are in favour of standards. Who could be against good education? But that is not the point. Talk about standards is just a code for other issues: of 'discipline', the 3 Rs; of Victorian values and the Good Old Days.

As Charles has admitted, he hated studying Shakespeare at school, and the idea that every school leaver should have an appreciation of Shakespeare is irrelevant nonsense. Charles left one of the most expensive 'good' schools in the country without any qualifications in Maths or Science. He is fully equipped, like most of the privately educated elite, to take up a privileged position as one of our leaders in business and government, as an amateur in the

Twentieth century. What chance does that give us in the Twenty-first.

The demise of Mrs Hacksaw brought to an end an era, and opens another. Opportunities exist, but only if we understand the agenda, and respond to it coherently.

The new era will undoubtedly be more boring, neither Major, Kinnock (nor Ashdown for the matter) are overflowing with charisma, let alone a few ideas. But that makes it even more important to look at the realities of the situation, rather than the myths.

One myth that is worth laying is that of Thatcherism. As I'm a true right-on leftie, I was looking at my *New Statesman* the other day, and out dropped an ad for *Marxism Today*, "the magazine that first coined the term 'Thatcherism'". I can think of better ways of advertising a magazine (but then it does have about as many political ideas as Happy Shopper).

EDITORIAL

Thatcherism has, for too many people, been a convenient way of avoiding responsibility for having any coherent ideas. Opposition to "her" was enough.

But Thatcherism only really amounts to a style, her method of presentation, papered over a simplistic Victorian neo-liberal philosophy. The fact that she was able to face down so much opposition says a lot for the quality of that opposition, as well as the institutions that represent us.

Now we would not suggest that we have any admiration for the Iron Lady. Hate is rather a mild term for our attitude to her, but she has asked a few relevant questions, especially of the more woolly-minded or 'conservative' of us radicals.

So where does that leave schools? As with much of Conservative policy in the 80s, the agenda has been populist, small-minded, parsimonious and re-distributive in favour of the middle classes.

A government that almost exclusively educates their children in the private sector can have no true feeling for the state sector. So it has been left to run down. Soon we may well have the class-less society. The educational establishment has been an

would almost certainly have lost control over education in a continued Hacksaw regime, as much due to her obsession with destroying local government (along with anything else that might seek to oppose her) as any coherent reason.

This might still happen, but only as part of the campaign to patch up the Black Hole that was the Poll Tax. But otherwise the future sees only more benign neglect, that very English way we have of genteel and incompetent decay, because the 'dry' economists are still in charge.

At times it seems as though all we do is oppose, that we are the New Conservatives. At present we oppose many of the changes that have been occurring in education. Schools have been so overwhelmed with change that it sometimes seems as though they are spending more time administering the changes rather than actually doing any teaching. But we need to have a coherent view of the future, to see the opportunities that lie ahead.

So what are the opportunities? Education can still be the Big Idea, but the nettle has to be grasped and the communication has to be clear and dynamic.

LMS, for example, could be an opportunity. It is incredibly popular with heads and governors, for obvious reasons. It places a lot of power in their hands. While we might not agree that they are the best people to give power to, the idea of transferring power to the users of the system is eminently sensible and libertarian. And from our point of view the main users are the students.

Imaginative initiatives of this kind are an example that could be followed in different areas of education. A proper system of grants, available as of right, could enable access to education for people of all ages. Older teenagers could be given a wider range of study options, and not be restricted to GCSE or other exam-based studies. The idea of flexi-schooling could be brought into the system. In other words the opportunity is there to apply some radical thought of a non-destructive nature to make education a very powerful Big Idea.

But the problem is, can you see Labour showing enough imagination to actually do any of this?

ideological opposition to the New Victorians. So laws are enacted to limit their influence.

Labour had shown signs of using Education and Training as their Big Idea for the coming election, so the voucher system was being prepared as a populist measure to counter it.

This will not happen now, as Major is far too careful to actually stand up for anything. And in essence he doesn't need to. The voucher system is with us through the back door, via Local Management of Schools. The opening of school roles and per capita payments is, in effect, the same thing. It also conveniently avoids the objections of the Treasury, who wish to avoid spending the taxpayers money subsidising private education (yes, true!).

So what will the education policy of the new government be? A studied papering over of the cracks is likely, the quiet abandoning of any high profile disaster areas (like the City Technology Colleges), together with careful words of caring and concern. Local authorities

Moments like this are special

Huw Thomas looks at the National Curriculum, and argues that education cannot be crystallised into convenient little sentences.

"We start with respect for the child. We want to let education arise from the child's natural interpretation of life. We don't want to then turn around and start passing crude judgments based on a restricted view of what the child should have been aiming for. Instead we will dare to let the 'targets' be wherever the arrow lands."

WE HAD JUST FINISHED washing out the milk bottles. The bubbles left behind by the washing up liquid displayed the colours of the spectrum. Liam was seven years old at the time. He was fascinated by the colours, and turned the bottle in his hands. He handed me the bottle saying, "The bubbles are breaking up the sunlight".

Moments like this are very special in education. They are the spontaneous way in which children often surprise us with the extent of their knowledge and understanding. Where Liam's explanation arose from I do not know. It might have been something he knew. It might have been something he observed at that moment. I didn't ask - because I didn't want to spoil the moment by behaving like a teacher. We just went on looking.

A few weeks later our school had its Baker Day. We were looking at the document *Science in the National Curriculum*. There was some debate about whether or not Liam had attained Science Attainment Target 15, Level 6, Section a. To attain this pupils must, "Understand how prisms and lenses refract and disperse light". The argument was - had he?

Alright, so it was washing-up liquid bubbles, but then what is a prism? He used the words, "breaking up" and not "refracting", but does it matter all that much? What would actually count as "understanding" in this case?

I could produce an explanation of the process straight out of my O-level physics course, but there is a sense in which I don't understand the process of refraction. "Understand" is a most elusive word.

When the science curriculum explains that children should, "understand that they need food to be active", does it mean that they should be able to explain their digestive system, or simply know that they want something to eat at lunchtime?

When you read the National Curriculum, you begin to see just what a mess it all is. It's a mess because certain valuable points that many of us take for granted have been overlooked in the process of producing it.

However, those of us who sat in angry meetings drafting responses to the Kingman Report, and other portents of what was to follow, now find ourselves struggling to guide the implementation of the results. Let's bear in mind those things we are aware of (and always were aware of!) which got left out somewhere along the line.

Firstly, many of us will have a different understanding of education from that which is enshrined in the current programmes. We do not see education as something that can be crystallised into little sentences.

The National Curriculum says, "Do you want to know what education is about? It's about these facts, these understandings and these bits of knowledge". Not only do we read this 'Curriculum' and wonder at what has been left out, we also find ourselves confronted by the stifling of those things apparently enshrined therein. The result is that Liam's enjoyment of the milk bottle becomes Science A.T. 15, Level 6 Section a. It is deadened.

Secondly, the National Curriculum forces many of us to re-assert our starting point in education. The Curriculum is made up of 'targets' that have been laid down by panels of experts.

These 'targets' tell us where the child should be in the process of learning. It turns children into arrows in an academic archery tournament. Each child is simply shot at the target and then judged a 'hit' or a 'miss'. Yet many of us know education cannot work to its fullest in such a system.

We start with respect for the child. We want to let education arise from the child's natural interpretation of life. We don't want to then turn around and start passing crude judgments based on a restricted view of what the child should have been aiming for. Instead we will dare to let the 'targets' be wherever the arrow lands.

Thirdly, many of us are suspicious. We know where this curriculum comes from. Just remind yourself of this 'Bakerism' from the early days of the Education Reform Act.

"Parents do not want teachers forcing what is called 'positive images for gays' on innocent children. They want traditional values in a framework of discipline". (T.E.S. 13/2/87)

There in a nutshell you have the caricature. Those evil teachers perverting all our innocent five-year-olds. However, help is on hand in the form of the Tory Government, who will sort them all out and knock our children into learning good old basics, Victorian values and all that sort of thing. The familiar appeal to mass hysteria is all too familiar.

If we hold on to these three insights into education they will help us as we

come to terms with the existence and imposition of the National Curriculum.

Firstly, our understanding of the content of education is fuller than that enshrined in the National Curriculum ring binders. Many of us will still want to liberate the curriculum to include whatever we and the children consider relevant and meaningful. Naturally we will do things that cover the odd Attainment Target, just as Liam did when he played with the milk bottles. But the Targets won't be our leaders. We will be led by better leaders - like curiosity and interest. If we cover an Attainment Target, so be it! If we leave a few out, then let's be rebellious enough to say, "So what?"

Secondly, we re-assert our starting point in education. We will find that we possess a belief in the process of education that works better than the National Curriculum. Not that the brains behind the National Curriculum seem to give much thought to the idea that there is a process of education other than the most simplistic notion of pouring facts into empty heads.

We believe that teaching and learning do not automatically go hand in hand. We believe that freedom results in the best learning. Such a learning process is unpredictable, but it works. It leaves room for the child's naturally active mind. Freedom works

better than coercion, and because it works better we will uphold it. We won't dance to the tune called by the one who paid the piper. We will give the pipes to the children. Won't that be a dance!

Thirdly, we have that suspicion. We

"Freedom works better than coercion, and because it works better we will uphold it."

know where this 'curriculum' comes from. We know who imposed it, and we don't like the way it was imposed. We are learning to live with it, but we are going to make it an awkward co-habitation. We don't need to like it, excuse it or co-operate with it. Hopefully it will move out before long.

Nigel Wright draws an interesting parallel between the National Curriculum and the "Revised Code" of 1862. That failed for the same reason that the National Curriculum will fail,

simply because it enshrines a content and process of education which is, in reality, different from the way learning really works. We must watch this failure carefully, exploiting it and publicising it, because as it fails our views on education are justified.

For a long time now, many of us will have been advocating the broadest curriculum learned through liberated processes. We will also have been suspicious of the recent attacks on education under the Conservative Government. Recently we have had to take those views and apply them to the imposition of the National Curriculum. I have tried to outline some of the values that we stand for and some of the ways in which we can uphold them. We do not have to go along with the National Curriculum.

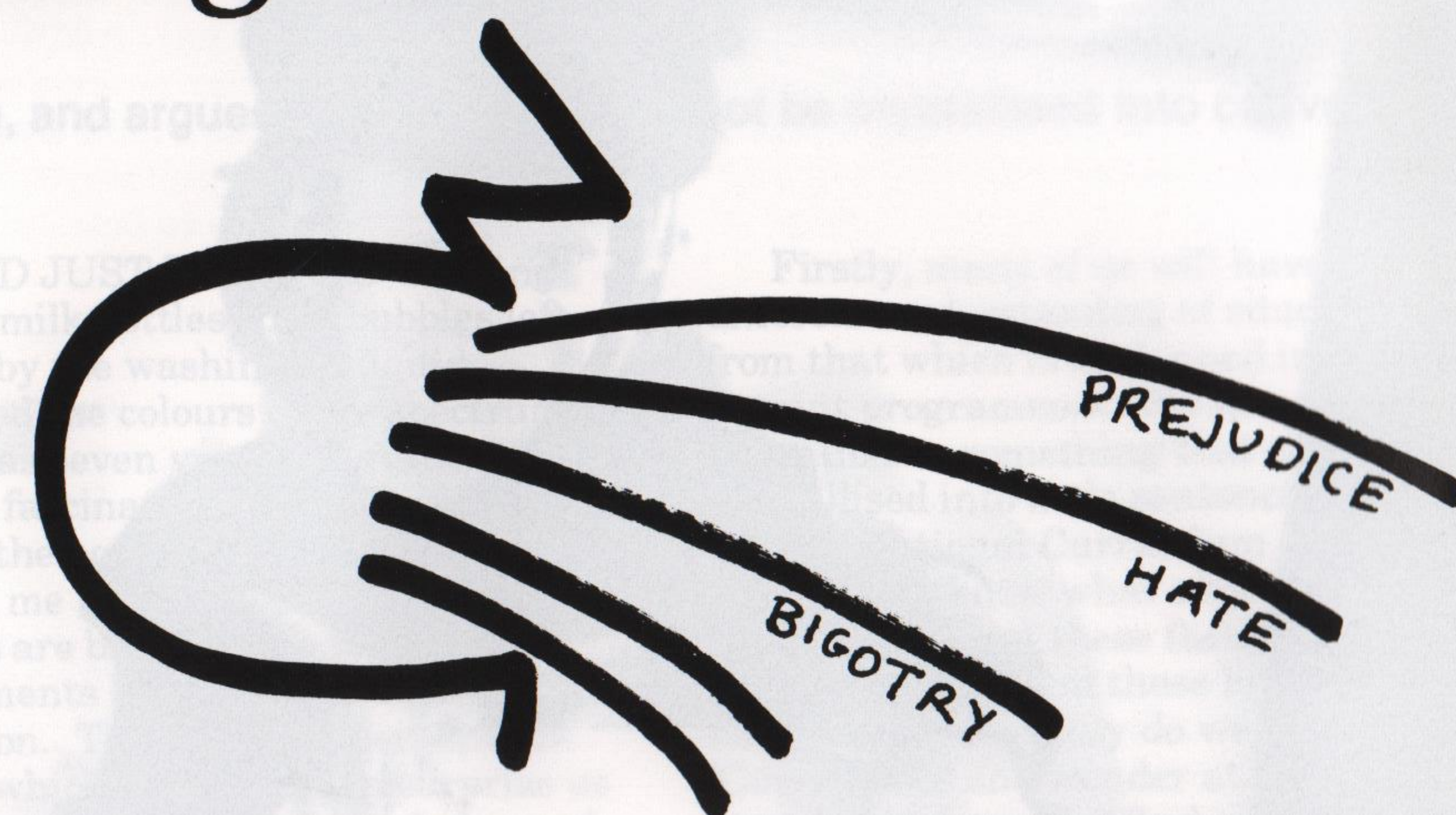
What we believe and do will continue to thrive long after it has been put aside, because what we believe and do is rooted in what we understand about children and learning. Our views thrive because children are, by nature, like Liam.

They are imaginative, curious, divergent, thoughtful and creative, and that's a sight better than the National Curriculum would seem to be implying. In short, many of us know that children are too good for the National Curriculum.



The science of sound: learning at the Bukt Centre

Talking Heads



R---- F---- SCHOOL is a comprehensive in Leicester. Its Head is one Mr W----. Until the end of Summer Term 1990, one of his staff was Mrs Harbans Kaur. At the end of that term she obtained another teaching job, apparently to her relief, since at the leaving party held for her by the staff she said in her farewell speech that she could not see "what the Head saw in my application form when I applied for the job."

From the back of the staff room the Head said quite audibly that he had taken Mrs Kaur on because he had "wanted a wog on the staff."

Mrs Kaur, a retiring and peace loving person, was speechless.

However, after a pause for thought, she went to the Leicester Council for Racial Justice. It is understood that this body was shocked by the abuse and brought in a representative from the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and her local Union Divisional Representative from the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

What should have happened then was that her Union should have immediately instructed its solicitors and regional paid official to take all possible action to secure redress for Mrs Kaur in the form of public apologies and damages.

Normally the CRE regard a Union as being the first line of defence for workers in this sort of position. However, in this case it seems that they regarded the Union as being so laggardly, and the abuse so obvious (and, more important from their point of view, winnable), that they themselves took the case to an Industrial Tribunal.

It is important to remember here that Leicestershire County Council (LCC) claims in its job adverts to be an "equal opportunities employer" and that its policy is "to combat racist behaviour." The cynicism of these words is underlined by the fact that the LCC is suspected of wanting to help to pay legal costs for Mr W----. Whether or not this is so, it is certain that the Council offered no help to the victim, Mrs Kaur, towards her costs.

The irony is doubled when one learns that, during 1990, the LCC appointed a Senior Assistant Education Officer for Equal Opportunities, who reportedly earns £27,000 a year. The black population of Leicestershire must wonder what he is doing for this money. There is no obvious evidence that he was of any help to Mrs Kaur.

At the tribunal, Mr W---- was represented by a solicitor from the National Association of Head Teachers. His Deputy, who was available as a witness in support of Mrs Kaur, was represented by the Assistant Masters

and Mistresses Association. There were plenty of County Hall officials to represent the Authority. The NUT did not bother to find out when the hearing was, and was conspicuous by its absence.

The case was settled out of court. W---- had to agree to apologise to his staff for what he had said, to go on race awareness courses, to monitor racial incidents at the school and to pay Mrs Kaur an undisclosed amount in compensation.

However, W---- need not be too down in the mouth, as it was apparent that the LCC, from its large and friendly presence in the court, was showing him the maximum goodwill. Quite why the Council should smile on white, male headteachers, who deal out racist abuse from their position of power, is not clear.

It seems that racist incidents were not uncommon in his school either. Some parents recounted in confidence about how their adopted black child was picked on by staff at the school, and allocated blame for small incidents which occurred in his vicinity. Eventually they transferred him to a more liberal school several miles away, where he thrived.

Ironically it was on the Monday after the hearing that a package of materials about combating racist abuse arrived at the school. The materials say that the LCC would support employees in any case of racial harassment. Was this a misprint for "support white bosses"?

Mrs Kaur, a female Asian teacher, had to summon up all her courage in order to take the matter as far as she did. If the case had been taken further it is highly probable that the outcome would have been more embarrassingly public for both the abuser and the LCC. She was taking on the predominantly white male hierarchy that dominates County Hall - there are three black administrative workers there at the last count. *Lib ED* wonders how many other black and Asian teachers and workers throughout the country, in the

classroom or in the staff room, are suffering similar racist abuse on a daily basis. How many people are made to feel themselves to be down-graded and discounted simply because of their skin colour and origin and sex? Racism is something that black people live with, but which we must all learn not to let pass without challenge.

There is a postscript. On January 30th the Leicester Herald and Post, a local free paper ran a front page headline, "SCHOOL HEAD IN RACE ROW". This gave some account of the incident, which had been picked up by an angered County Councillor, Paul Sood. He wanted to ask questions in the full County Council meeting.

He was stopped by the Council chairman, Alec Strachan, who said that no reply should be given, as it did not fall within the rules laying down how questions should be asked.

Councillor Sood has also been told that there have been more than 15 complaints of racial discrimination since the equal opportunities policy had been introduced in 1982, and that none of these had been successful.

Thus we not only see injustice being done, but we see its perpetrators being protected, and "equal opportunities policies" being used as an instrument to keep overt racism off the agenda, and even to deny that racism and sexism exist.

This story from Leicestershire demonstrates two sorry facts. Firstly that County Councils, in spite of protestations of "equal opportunities policies", are likely to support oppressors against those they have wronged. Secondly that the NUT is failing to take quick and appropriate action in cases where its members have been abused by those further up the hierarchy.

NOTE: We are not allowed to publish the name Mr W---, as part of the out of court settlement with Mrs Kaur.

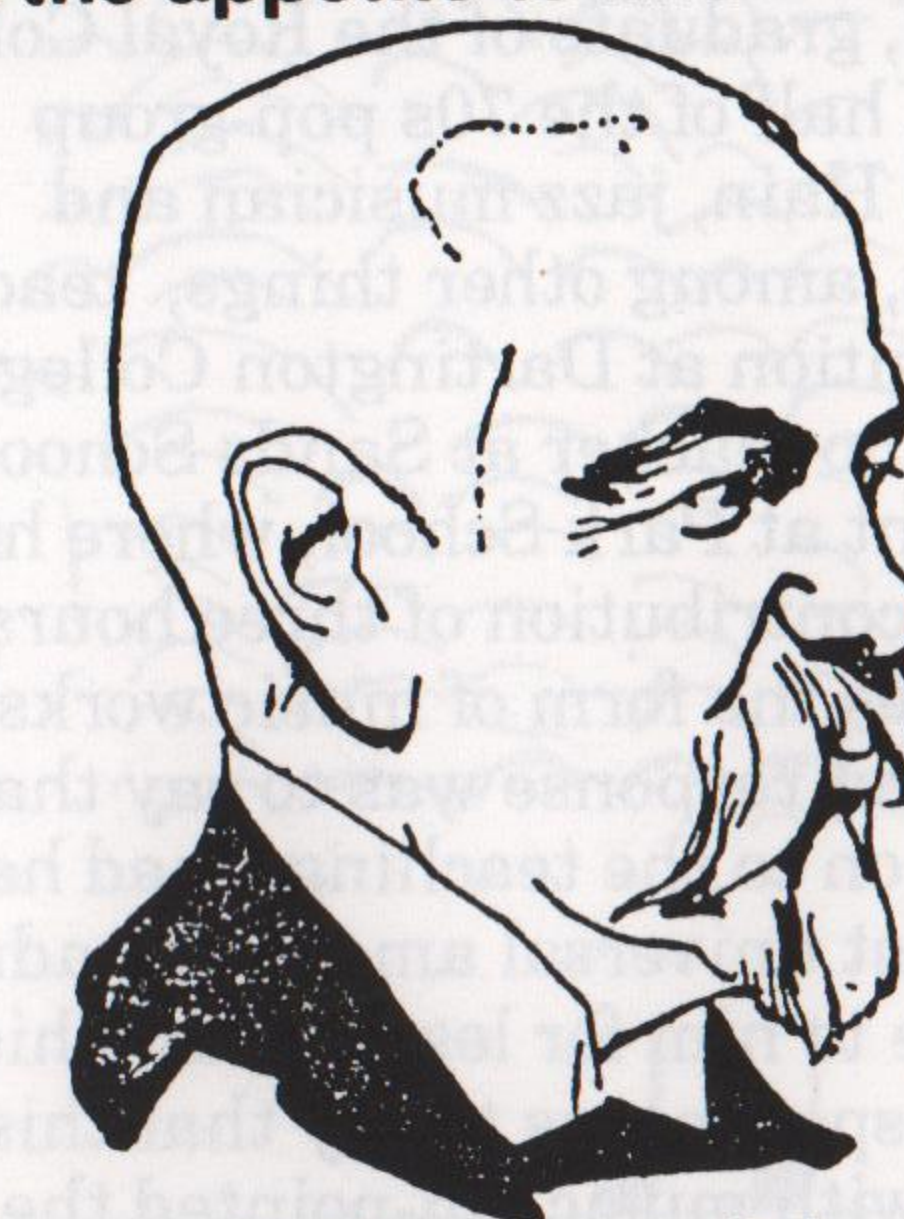
Francisco Ferrer in Brazil

Well known amongst libertarians, anarchists and people interested in the history of educational ideas, Francisco Ferrer founded a free school in Barcelona - "The Modern School". This became highly successful and influential; there is even a bust and tablet in honour of Ferrer built into the walls of the city of Perugia in Italy, for example. Ferrer was a prolific writer and translator and published a Bulletin which he sent all over Europe as well as to America.

The authorities, and especially the church, did not like his activities. They closed his school and, when there was a popular insurrection in Barcelona in 1909, a charge was trumped up against him of organising the revolt. He was found guilty and shot by firing squad in the moat of Montjuich Castle in Barcelona. During his trial and after his death there was an international outcry at the injustice of it; many "Modern Schools" were founded as a result of his judicial murder.

His real guilt, in the eyes of his accusers, was to give children "a true education which does not accept either dogmas or tradition, because they are a sort of imprisonment of the mind's vitality; limits imposed by passing phases during social evolution. We rely only on solutions that have been demonstrated by facts, theories backed up by reason, and truths confirmed by certain proofs. The basis of our teaching is that the brain of the individual must be the instrument of the will ... We want people to be able to contribute to the good of humanity without excluding anybody through stinking privilege ...". It was crime enough.

The article below, by Edgar Rodriguez, gives an idea of the spread of Ferrer ideas in Brazil, until it became illegal to breathe such sedition there too. It whets the appetite to know more of what went on. It first appeared in May 1989 in *Cultura Libertaria*.



AS SOON AS they reached Brazil, many European immigrants carried on with what they had been doing before; spreading their ideas and the ideology of freedom.

The country had been dominated by slave owners whose descendants occupied the most important administrative posts. They imported manual workers from abroad "to discover and reconquer" the immense inland territory of Brazil that the original Portuguese settlers had consigned to the freebooters.

However, this exposed the colony to the new ideas that were coming from Europe. The last decades of the nineteenth century saw arrival of the first wave of the "idealists".

Once landed, they discovered, even while they were getting used to the new ways of life, the climate and the food, that the native workers did not know how to read. Many of the immigrants were illiterate as well, and seemed to suffer from a sort of mental torpor; the result of religion and official schooling - a legacy of the home country to its children.

In order to confront this plague of ignorance, which suited the boss class very well, the libertarians decided to take action; they threw themselves into the publication of journals, getting those who knew how to read to do so in a loud voice at the work places during meal times. They organised theatre groups and held discussions so as to attract the attention of fellow workers. It was the beginning of a proletarian literacy campaign, an opening of new horizons. Thanks to the help of the libertarians,

who were offering a new philosophy of life, a reason to live, people were getting a different world view.

At first the literacy campaign was carried out on an individualised basis - from campanera to campanero, but then it was continued in improvised schools in places where workers met.

European books and journals swept into Brazil, winning over workers with their message of emancipation and revolution. These ideas were also taken up by intellectuals who became involved in helping to promulgate anarchist ideas amongst the proletariat by setting up schools which took up the new methods being pioneered in France and Spain.

O Amigo Povo was a weekly paper that tells us about the founding of the *Escola Germinal*, on 19th May 1902, in Sao Paulo.

In Rio de Janeiro the Peoples University was opened in 1904 with a talk by a young anarchist doctor called Fabio Luz, who worked to promote anarchist ideas in Brazil until his death. One of the students to go through this University was Matins Fontes, who became a well known

Brazilian poet.

In 1905, *A Terra Livre*, another weekly anarchist paper, announced the establishment of the *Escola Livre* (Free School) for the peasants and workers league.

In the 1890s, a group of anarchists founded a school in Porto Alegre named after Elisee Reclus, influential libertarian thinker and scientist, who had been travelling in the area at the time.

In Sao Paulo, the anarchist press announced the foundation, by two libertarians Joao Penteado and Adelino de Pinho, of the Modern Schools Numbers 1 and 2; also a school named the First of May was started in Vila Isabel, Rio de Janeiro.

The Modern School Movement became most well known during the campaign for the defence of Francisco Ferrer.

At about the same time two militant libertarians, Zenon de Almeida and Santos Barbosa from Rio, wrote political plays: *The Shooting of Francisco Ferrer* (a drama in two acts and one scene), and *The Martyr of Montjuich* (drama in three acts). These pieces were performed dozens of times up until 1930 when the dictator, Vargas, seized power.

In the main centres of Brazil, the demonstrations in Ferrer's defence took firm hold of peoples minds, and in Porto Alegre, the main port of entry for incoming Italians and Spaniards, popular pressure "convinced" the State Governor, and one of the city's streets is named after Francisco Ferrer; a decision that has been respected by his successors ever since.

Dead musicians society

Music has the potential to allow students to develop their ability to express themselves, yet all too often ends up as another trial of rote learning. Here David Gribble, of Sands School, discusses the potential of Music teaching, and where it goes horribly wrong.

MUSIC IS AN OPPORTUNITY for self-expression. It is therefore strange that almost all instrumental teaching is directed at enabling people to express only what someone else has written. It is as if music were limited to the art of imitating other musicians. A hundred years ago art students used to copy famous paintings. Piano students are still copying famous music.

... music does not come out of instruments, it comes out of people.

I had my first piano lessons fifty years ago. First you had to struggle to play sequences of notes that had been specially written for beginners and had very little interest in themselves as tunes.

Then you went on to pieces which sounded pretty good when the teacher played them, but which took you several weeks to learn to play through, even slowly, with frequent mistakes and no expression. When you progressed as far as expression, you found that that too had all been written for you, mostly, for some extraordinary reason, in Italian.

For a long time I seriously believed that it was impossible to play music unless it had been previously written down.

In terms of language, this would mean that it was possible to read out loud, but not to speak spontaneously. Trying to play by ear, or worse still, to extemporise, was just mucking about. When I learnt that traditional jazz bands played without any music at all, I thought it must be the result of some kind of telepathy.

Now I play jazz quite a lot, at a fairly simple level, and in doing so I depend far too much on my knowledge of basic chords, and I am still far too often unable to play what I hear in my head because I am afraid I'll get it

wrong as I haven't seen it written down. Although I can recognise written notes, without an instrument I can only work out very simple tunes indeed, and even then I'm not sure I'm right. I had piano lessons for most of my school years, on and off, and in the succeeding forty years I have still not overcome a number of basic blocks.

Is there a way of teaching music which would have avoided my unhappy and unsuccessful hours with the Moonlight Sonata on the one hand, and on the other developed what musical talents I have so that I could play by ear, and read and write straightforward tunes without having to try them out on an instrument first?

I put this question to Julian Marshall, graduate of the Royal College of Music, half of the 70s pop-group Marshall Hain, jazz musician and currently, among other things, teacher of composition at Dartington College of Arts, piano teacher at Sands School and parent at Park School, where his parental contribution of three hours a week takes the form of music workshops.

His first response was to say that my reaction to the teaching I had had was almost universal among the adults who came to him for lessons, and his second response was to say that this problem with music pin-pointed the question of how much education is about the amassing of knowledge, and how much it is about helping children to learn to explore for themselves.

He illustrated his ideas by describing the activities he uses in his occasional music workshops. He covers a variety of topics in any one workshop, but none of them depend on any previously acquired musical knowledge.

He tries to help the participants experience and respond to some of the elements of music, for instance he may start with rhythm games. Groups may be asked to pass a clap round a circle, first straightforwardly and then backwards, backwards and forwards simultaneously, missing out every other person and so on or they may play the game of copy-cats or perform rhythm rounds.

Sometimes he divides people into small groups to make rhythm machines, when they use not merely their hands for clapping but also their voices, feet and any other part of the body. This last exercise helps people to understand that you don't need an instrument to make music - you are the instrument

yourself, and if you use a piano or a trumpet to help you, you are only using it as a machine.

Another activity involves making people aware of the sounds that surround us all the time. He may invite children to think of all the noises that you might hear in the kitchen, and then tell a story purely in sounds. Another more complex version is to invite them to improvise the sound-track of a film with dialogue, sound-effects and music.

An orchestra with a conductor but no instruments, in which different groups produce different sounds or rhythms in response to the conductor's gestures indicating stop, start, louder and softer, is immense fun and can produce extraordinarily interesting effects. Again this illustrates that music does not come out of instruments, it comes out of people.

Listening to music is also likely to be a part of a workshop. Julian will play five or six fairly short contrasting pieces, asking the listeners not to judge them, not to decide whether they like them or not, but just to let them in

There is little pleasure in listening to music played accurately but without feeling

anyway, and then to write or draw images associated with the music. Even rowdy groups of eight-year-olds have listened for as long as thirty minutes, with spectacular responses, and adults have been at it for two hours at a time.

The important thing about this approach is that it demonstrates that what matters is the intention and involvement of the performer. Technical perfection is an irrelevance, and indeed technically perfect machines are taking all the feeling out of pop music.

Society as a whole seems to believe that the more complex something is the better it is, and student musicians apply



this to music. This is quite inappropriate; an example is the way inexperienced jazz musicians feel they have to fill every second of their solos with notes, whereas the great performers have time to listen and wait.

How, I wanted to know, does this kind of approach lead to the actual learning of how to play an instrument? Again, the important thing is the intention of the student.

Students must have some idea of how they want to use the instrument for themselves. Their learning then becomes purposeful in quite a different way from that of the student who only wants to know how to work out what the notes mean.

The most valuable lesson Julian learnt in all his musical education was from a teacher at the Royal College of Music; when Julian asked him about a technical difficulty in a piece, this teacher gave him no technical advice,

but instead helped him to see the passage in context as a part of the musical whole; the technical difficulty would then resolve itself.

Most children asking for piano lessons ask because they want to pass grades, or learn to play particular pieces. They do not want to use the piano for the exploration of sound, and are often not interested by being asked to use the instrument to create expressive sounds.

They want to be imitative, they want to learn pieces by rote, because that is what other people do, that is what music seems to them to be. It is as if the left side of the brain were trying to take over what only has meaning as a right brain activity.

Julian feels that children have to go on the route they themselves have chosen, but he also wants to push them to try to do things they might otherwise feel they were not able to do.

There is little pleasure in listening to music played accurately but without feeling, whereas the emotional involvement of a musician can be inspiring even without much technique. Obviously it is an advantage for a musician to be able to pick up a piece of music and play it, but it is much better first to be able to create music of your own.

I returned to my own problems, and gave as an illustration the fact that I still cannot play the simple Haydn pieces I was first given to learn when I was about twelve. He told me that I was looking at it purely as an intellectual exercise, an interpretation of written symbols. If I really wanted to learn to play Haydn, then I should start by listening to a lot of Haydn.

Of course I know that you can't play jazz until you have heard it. Why had I never thought of Haydn in the same way?

Major of Arabia

9.00 am Working breakfast with Boss Clarke. I must confess to being a little nervous about meeting this great man, fresh from his victories over the doctors, the nurses, the ambulancemen, and, not forgetting, of course, his celebrated "no prisoners" campaign against the haemophiliacs. Having dealt the Health Service a series of crippling blows, the Boss has now been sent in to finish off state education. We are ushered into his presence.

"First item on the agenda then, gentlemen," says the Boss between taking bites out of a whole chicken, grease running down his chin. "Teacher morale."

"Well, Boss," I begin, "we've worked out a package that builds on our successes over the past few years. An increased workload consisting of longer hours, shorter holidays, larger classes and more marketing and administration, coupled with yet another wage cut and a continuing campaign of criticism and abuse in the press and on the television."

"I don't quite see how this is going to raise teacher morale," the Boss remarks through a mouthful of chicken breast.

"Ah! That's the whole secret Boss. We're not actually trying to raise teacher morale. The whole idea is to undermine it, to keep the bastards on the defensive, to grind them down. What our psychological warfare chaps have advised us is that if we express mild concern about teacher morale every now and again, we can get away with attacking them without the public really noticing. On top of that it also increases teacher frustration. You've only got to read the *Guardian* letters page to see how well it works!"

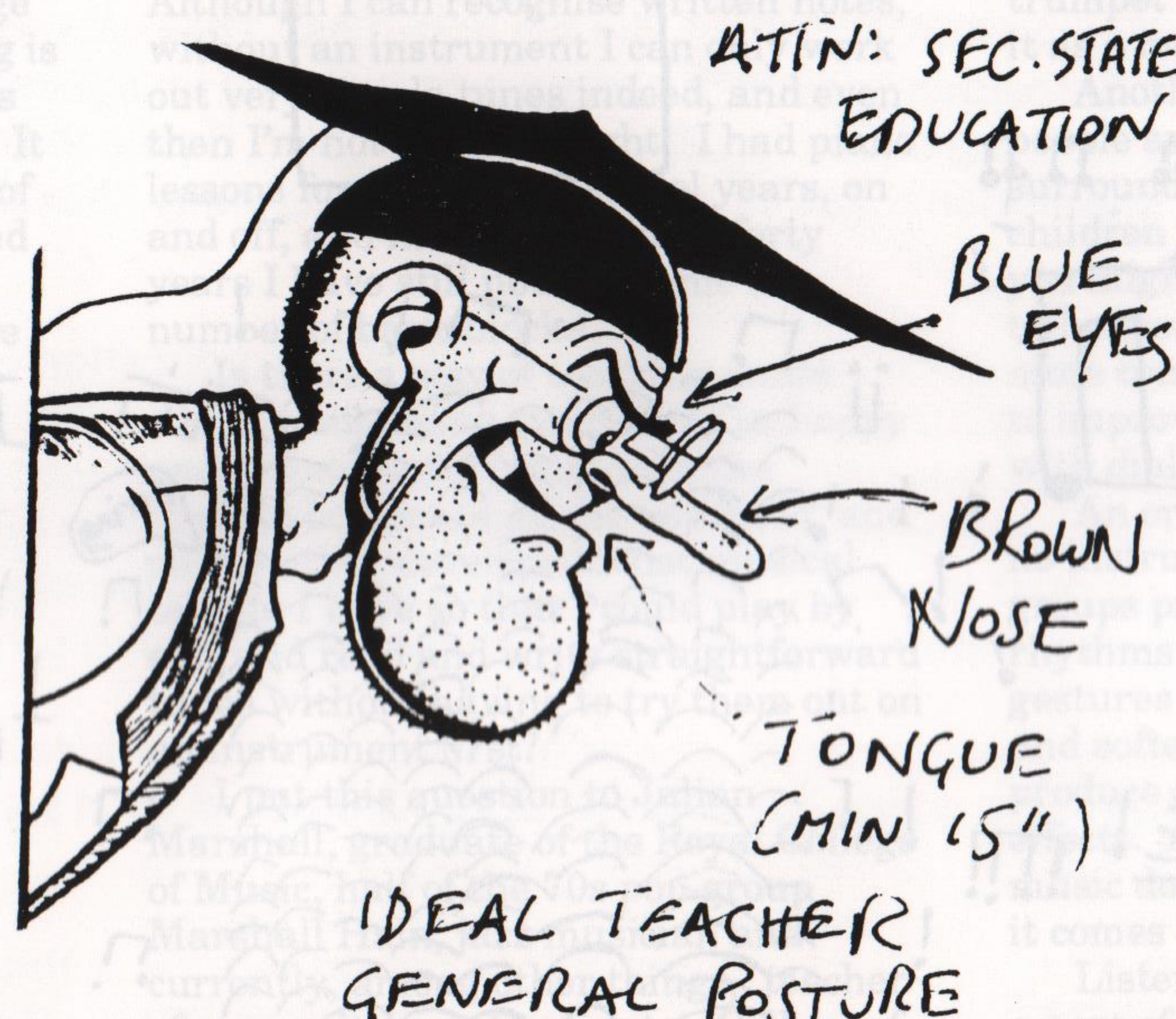
"Well it certainly had me fooled," says the Boss, starting on his second chicken. "Have we got anything else planned?"

"We're really going to put the boot in on them, Boss. Teacher Appraisal! The beauty of this is that it will penalise all those teachers with low morale. Of course, we've dressed the scheme up with a lot of time-consuming mumbo-jumbo to keep the bastards guessing and satisfy the unions, but there is a top secret handy guide for headteachers that gets right to the heart of the matter. Shall I read the relevant extract, Boss?"

The Boss belched his consent and continued grinding small chicken bones between his teeth.

"While ensuring that all staff spend as many of their free periods and as much of their own time as possible

involved in the various assessment procedures, thereby suffering the maximum inconvenience and stress, DES experts have, for the benefit of headteachers, successfully isolated a number of physical characteristics that



identify the ideal teacher. He/she has blue eyes, a brown nose and a fifteen inch tongue; he/she habitually walks on his/her knees while, at the same time, bending over backwards; when addressed by a superior, he/she invariably replies 'Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full, sir' and exhibits a compulsive desire to volunteer for extra work. There should be no difficulty in identifying, rewarding and promoting these individuals."

The Boss nods his appreciation.

"What with Boss Heseltine's Poll Tax reform," I continue, "what with only teachers having to pay it from now on, we should really be able to knock them for six. It's as easy as bombing Baghdad."

The Boss laughs, throwing yet another chicken carcass over his shoulder. "You chaps have done really well," he compliments us. "I honestly can't see state education recovering from this little lot. Thank God nobody important sends their kids to state schools, eh! Anyway, enough of this shop talk. Any of you gentlemen face a slice of roast sucking teacher? There's plenty to go round."

3.00 pm At last breakfast ends and I can get back to the office. I inspect the new official schools' biography of THE MAJOR. The junior version is written by Barbara Cartland and the secondary version by Geoffrey Archer (and it's got more sex, treachery, bloodshed and greed in it). Here, for the first time, the

truth is revealed about war hero MAJOR OF ARABIA's parentage. Far from being the son of trapeze artists who turned to selling garden gnomes, he is, in fact, the illegitimate love child of a passion that dominated British politics for decades; BIG MOTHER's love for Cecil Parkinson.

Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Cathy and Heathcliffe, Constance and Mellors, Terry and June have now been joined by CECIL AND MARGARET. In the Cartland version they find the infant MAJOR under a burning bush while out walking hand-in-hand through the English countryside. Personally I suspect the Archer version for older children is more accurate in ascribing THE MAJOR's conception to a split condom while celebrating the sinking of the Belgrano. It certainly explains why Richard

Branson has never received the peerage he paid for.

I also have time to flick through the new Kelvin Mackenzie schools history of the war with Iraq, THE SADDAM BUSTERS. The war seems to have been fought entirely by young naked women waving Union Jacks and apparently the French were the real enemy all the time. Good old Kelvin, he certainly knows how to make up a good yarn!

5.00pm Just finished my occasional piece on teachers and education for the Melanie Phillips column in the *Guardian* when I receive a phone call from Boss Clarke's office. Apparently he was reading the *TES* over lunch and nearly died of apoplexy when he got to Ted Wragg's column on the back. A whale bone caught in his throat and he has been rushed to hospital. I just hope they can find one that he never closed down. His last gasped words were, it seems, "BRING ME THE HEAD OF TED WRAGG!"

For once I think the Boss has got it wrong. Every court can afford at least one jester, and anyway, how can we be certain that cutting Wragg's head off will shut him up!

Next Issue: Teacher shortages are solved by THE MAJOR's personal intervention: qualifications for becoming a teacher are made the same as those needed to become a Prime Minister!

A law unto themselves

Many people believed that when A.S. Neill died in 1973 Summerhill would die with him. That was not to be the case. Summerhill survives today as a self regulating social organism, independent of the man whose personality was so integral to its conception. Matthew Appleton, a houseparent at the school, describes what its unique system of self-government really means.

NEILL was aware that in many eyes his image as the understanding father everyone would have liked to have had, loomed larger than the insights into the nature of children which he so passionately conveyed through his writings and his life.

He says in the book *Summerhill*, "A question often put to me is 'But isn't Summerhill a one man show?' 'Could it carry on without you?' Summerhill is by no means a one man show... It is the idea of non interference with the growth of the child and the non pressure on the child that has made the school what it is."

To understand this it is necessary to understand the dynamic processes of which Summerhill is composed, and the structures that support these processes.

Summerhill is primarily a community of about seventy five children, aged between five and eighteen, and a dozen or so staff (not including the domestic staff, who come in on a daily basis, and as such do not partake fully in community life). There are a handful of 'day' children, but most are boarders.

School terms are usually eleven or twelve weeks long, and there are three terms in a year. Teaching and lessons exist within the framework of the community, but are by no means the hub of the wheel. A great deal of time and energy goes into the daily organization and maintenance of community life.

As a houseparent at Summerhill I am responsible for the health and well-being of the children in my care, but I have no authority over them, only the same rights as any other member of the community. Hence, I am able to live amongst children without having to play the role of policeman, a role I gladly decline.

This clears the way for more creative interactions, as friend, healer, confidant and, most important of all, equal.

The laws by which we live, though, are not uniform, but encompass a whole spectrum of needs and nuances. For example, different age groups have different bedtimes, and the staff have none. These variations are not imposed by a higher authority, but are voted on by the community as a whole. They are based purely on practical

considerations, and are open to change at any time.

This is the ground level of equality from which our social lives stem.

The backbone of Summerhill lies in its self-government. Those whose vision

and organizing, and the structure of self-government by which we all live together.

Self-government is no half hearted concession, it is a way of life. The community keeps itself healthy by



Larik, from Spain. The school is an international community.

of Summerhill centres around a benign old Neill dishing out kind words and wise advice have missed the point.

In the book *Summerhill, For and Against*, Bruno Bettelheim writes of Neill, "He does not realise that Summerhill works not because it is the right setting in which to raise children, but because it is nothing but an extension of his personality."

Bettelheim puts all of his faith in Neill, instead of the child in whom Neill put his faith. The essence of Neill's insights are disregarded, and replaced by a sentimental scenario in which the personality of the man becomes bigger than his message.

Summerhill continues today, nearly twenty years after Neill's death, not as a static hologram of its founder's personality, but as an alive, growing, vital community in its own right. Neill's influence is always there, but what keeps the community alive and pulsating is not the personality of any one individual, it is the children who fill the place with their zest for living, a staff who are not continually interfering

regular meetings which facilitate experiment, change and which constantly challenge the status quo. Hence there is a sense of perpetual mobility and growth, arising not from a faceless bureaucracy, but from personal observation and interaction, discussion and diplomacy. Many points of view are aired. Individuals exercise their right to directly influence the community they live in. Everything is open to question.

There are two weekly meetings, Tribunal on Friday afternoons and General Meeting on a Saturday evening. Attendance is not compulsory, but usually a large section of the community turn out, reflecting the whole age range of its members. Everyone has one vote, from the Principal to the youngest child.

Each week the chairperson for the next week is voted upon, so that new life is constantly being breathed into the position, preventing the type of stale officialdom that a permanent position would give rise to. The chairperson has certain powers, such as fining for

"You are mistaken if you think we adults have to lower ourselves to communicate with children. On the contrary, we have to reach up to their feelings, stretch, stand on our tiptoes."

JANUS KORCZAK

disruptive behaviour (the current fine being 1p per outburst), curtailing a business which seems to be going nowhere, and closing a meeting that has become too disorderly, though I have only ever seen this done once.

These powers, like all power and responsibility within the community, are delegated by the meeting, and can at any time be changed or dissolved by the meeting.

Another role which carries a lot of power and responsibility is that of Beddies Officer. A Beddies Officers Committee is elected each term to enforce the bedtime laws which the meeting has formulated. The Beddies Officer has the power to fine. The present fines are: *having* to get up at breakfast and be first in the queue; being fined the next day's pudding at lunchtime; and a 25p fine for being excessively disruptive after lights out. Bedtimes are always a source of much debate!

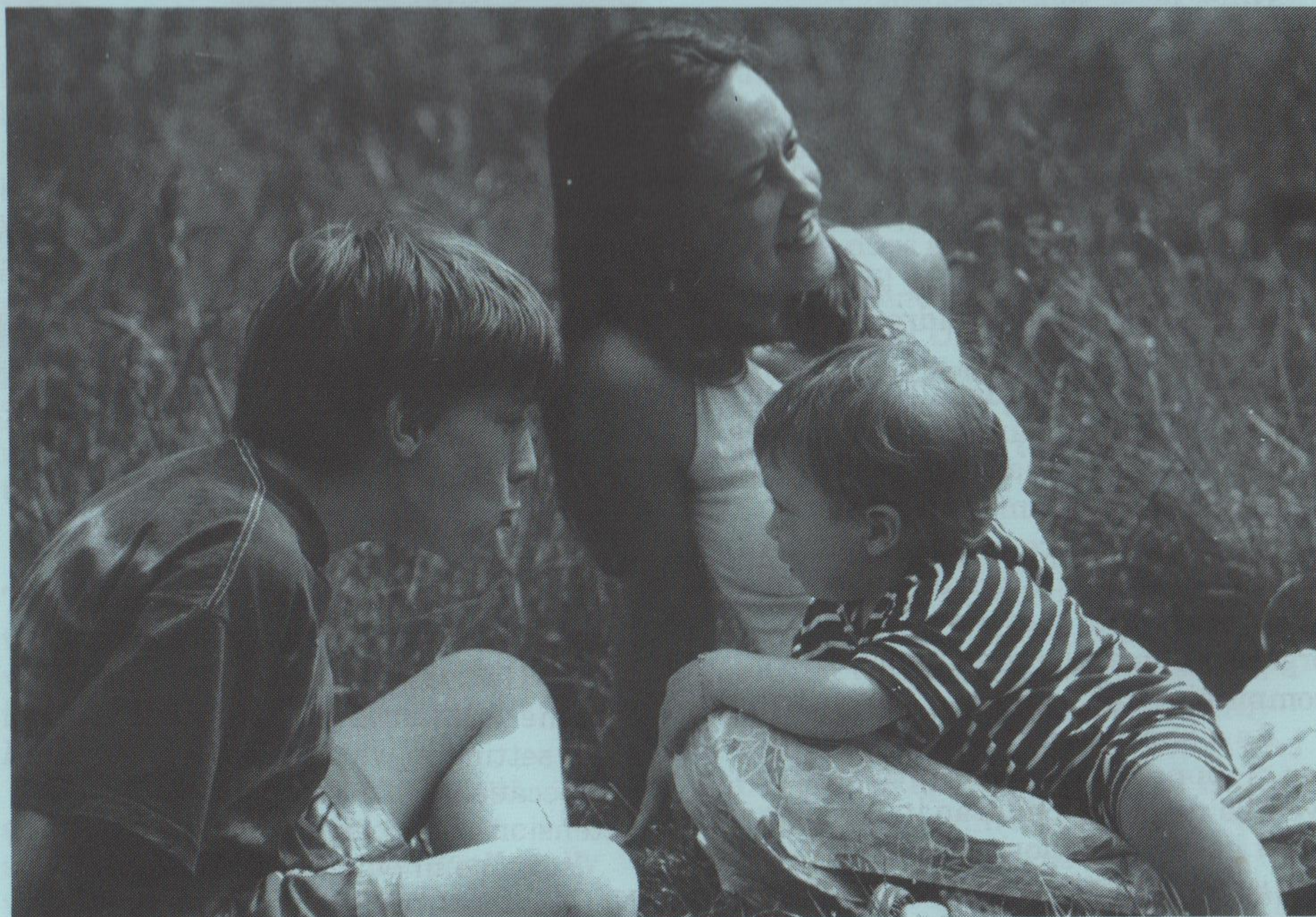
So, the very structures by which we live are self imposed. The laws we break are the laws *we* make! Law breaking and disputes between individuals are brought to the weekly Tribunal.

The meetings have something of the atmosphere of a tribal council. People listen carefully to cases, offer insights and proposals on what might be done to resolve the situation or curtail a certain activity. Maybe Nick has taken Roger's water pistol and refuses to give it back. Roger tells Nick 'I'll bring you up if you don't give it back.' The chances are that the gun will be returned then and there, but if not, Roger brings his case to Tribunal.

He tells the meeting his side of the story, then Nick has the opportunity to defend himself. If anyone has anything further to say they raise their hand, maybe to offer an eye witness account, to elucidate on the event, or make a proposal, which may be a fine, a dismissal of the business, or an ultimatum to return the gun. The chairperson reads out the proposals and they are voted on. The proposal that is carried is read out again by the chairperson, then the business is closed and it's onto the next business.

Cases brought on behalf of the community, rather than between individuals, are perhaps a bit more arbitrary, depending on how community conscious the individual is, but there are always enough people aware of the wider needs of the community to keep the ball rolling. Maybe Dawn has broken a community law by going downtown on her own after dark. Someone brings her up. She has the chance to offer an explanation, then anyone else who has anything to say can add their piece, then proposals are taken.

Dawn may receive a strong warning



Ben, Sophie and Yuma. All age groups mix together.

not to do it again, or a money fine, or a social fine, such as picking up litter for half an hour, or, more likely, she will be gaited for a day or two, which means she cannot go downtown at all during that period.

The community mainly leans on the side of leniency. After all, most of us have been brought up for something or other at sometime.

In most situations where adults and children live together all the power is in the hands of the adults, and they soon forget how the world looks through the

eyes of a child. One summer night I was awoken by voices in the room next to mine. I went in, irritated and bleary eyed, to find a roomful of fully dressed kids preparing to sneak out.

"If you're going to sneak out," I told them, "can you be a bit more quiet about it." They apologized and quietly filed down the stairs into the grounds outside. I could, of course, have brought them up for going out, but as they were being quiet now I didn't want to make an issue out of it. I returned to bed, but could not get back to sleep.

After a while I decided that rather than lie there and become resentful, I would go out and see what they were up to.

It was a beautiful night, well lit by the moon, and I soon traced the little band of nocturnal nomads to the large beechtree that stands at the front of the school grounds some way from the house.

This tree, known as the Big Beech, is a famous Summerhill landmark. Generations of Summerhillians have swung Tarzan style from its lower limbs, the focus of many a photograph.

Hiding in the bushes I made a few fearsome noises, which were echoed by nervous whispers and shuffling feet. Then I sprang out and was surrounded

by kids overjoyed that I'd joined them and that I was not some horrible beast that had taken up residence in the woods.

For the next hour or so I wandered around the grounds with them, exploring the shadows that the night cast, so different from the dimensions of daytime, and charged with the thrill of being against the law.

The next day at Tribunal we were brought up by one of the older girls for being out after the kids' lights out. (You can't keep much secret in this

community!) The kids were each fined their pudding and their late night that evening. (On Fridays and Saturdays everyone gets a later bedtime unless they have breached the bedtime rules on quite a few occasions in that week.)

As I didn't have a bedtime I was fined two puddings instead. It was an experience most adults who live with children never go through, an experience in which I stepped back into the world of childhood and saw the world again from that angle. To make this step every now and again is to renew your contact with childhood, which as an adult with adult concerns, is a valuable exercise.

The next time I start getting on my high horse about something one of the kids has done I will remember what it feels like to be on the other side of the fence.

In his book *When I am Little Again*, published in 1926, the Polish educationalist Janus Korczak wrote, "You are mistaken if you think we have to lower ourselves to communicate with children. On the contrary, we have to reach up to their feelings, stretch, stand on our tiptoes."

For this very reason self-government functions more fully than an adult controlled environment, for the children understand the emotional dimensions of their actions more readily than most adults do. The tone of Tribunal is neither moralistic nor psychological. There is no attempt to rise above the issue, but simply to deal with it as a meeting point between peoples needs and desires.

At Summerhill we are very uncomplicated on the whole. But when I say we *accept* anti-social behaviour I mean we do not meet it with shock or outrage, but with down to earth practical solutions. It is not acceptable, and we do not indulge it, but we accept that every now and then we all let rip a little. We may get annoyed and fed up with each other's shortcomings at times, but we do not get superior about them.

You may ask, if you do not moralize, how will the child learn right from wrong? But right and wrong are simply artificial distinctions by which we define our own ways of perceiving the world. To another they may appear quite different. Who am I to say that my way of seeing the world is superior to another's? Who am I to stand in judgement of another? Who knows what nebulous nightmares may propel another into a dark awakening? Who can comprehend the configurations of another's anxieties, fears and loneliness?

It is important though to distinguish between acceptance and indulgence, and this is where Summerhill's down to earth, practical approach to problems is most effective.

Simon is brought up for stealing from the Orange Peel Cafe (a cafe that a

committee of kids run on behalf of the community). He has been trying to buy friendship by giving away free sweets and chocolate.

Those who have put a lot of effort

have to be stolen, but comes of its own accord. He realizes this because he has been caught out, and not rejected. The proof of the pudding is in the attitude of the community, not in long drawn out



Mirai and Akira. Almost a third of the school is Japanese.

into the cafe feel angry and betrayed, as they were trying to raise money to improve the cafe, to buy comics and games to make the place a more social centre of activity. At the meeting a lot of strong views are aired, by the cafe committee and those who use it. He is fined, he has to make a bookshelf for the cafe in woodwork and clean up the cafe on the next three occasions the cafe is open. There is no long discussion about his motives. His insecurities are not dragged into the arena of the meeting.

After the meeting no-one is hostile to him, the air has been cleared. He realizes, even if just as a glimmer, that people accept him for who he is, that he does not have to put on a show to impress people, that friendship does not

discussions and analysis.

Equally, as there is an absence of morality and authority there is also an absence of resentment on the part of the person being brought up. The conflict is rational and not based on a power struggle, so the response is also rational.

Often you will see two kids playing together after a meeting where one has been fined in a case brought by the other. Because they have been able to sort out their problem through their own means rather than having to rely upon that great bastion of adult authority to step in, no-one feels the odds have been loaded against them, the conflict has not become confused with power struggles beyond the

"The legacy that Neill left behind is a living one"

immediate event.

Some people, of course, may find it difficult to talk at the meeting when they first arrive, so they may get someone to help them, or get an ombudsman to represent their case. Ombudsmen are elected at the beginning of each term. They usually consist of a group of older kids, who draw up a rota, whereby three ombudsmen per week are available to arbitrate in on the spot disputes.

The names of the ombudsmen for that week are announced at Tribunal, and if anyone is having problems with someone that cannot be deferred to Friday, they call an ombudsman to act on their behalf. Perhaps Kevin won't get out of Lucille's room, so she calls an ombudsman to uphold the law for her.

Usually ombudsman cases are settled there and then, but if the case is considered serious enough or no immediate resolution can be reached, the ombudsmen may then bring it up on Friday as well, and the offending party may be fined. The ombudsmen themselves do not have the power to fine, though they do have the power to confiscate anything which is being used dangerously or threateningly.

At the beginning of the General Meeting on Saturday evening there is always a Tribunal report, a review of who was brought up for what and what they were fined. At the end of the meeting there is 'appeals', when anyone can appeal what they were fined the day before, or at any other Tribunal if the fine is still valid.

Quite often a fine will be reduced or dropped, for rarely is a fine appealed unless the person really believes it to be too excessive or unjust. Maybe a case was very emotive and a somewhat over zealous fine incurred in the heat of the moment. By the next day the air has cleared and everyone is seeing things a bit calmer. The appeal is carried.

The main function of the General Meeting though is to formulate the laws by which we live and eradicate the ones that we disagree with, or amend them to make them more relevant to the needs of the community at that particular time.

It has been known, when the community has felt over cluttered with laws, for the whole lot to be dropped, and the process begun anew. At each Tribunal and General Meeting someone acts as secretary, taking down the proposals and keeping the minutes. If you want a case you see the secretary beforehand, and your name is called when it's your turn. You are able to

challenge the validity of any law, and propose it is replaced by a more relevant one, or you may want to draw up a new law to cover something you think needs to be defined more clearly.

There is usually some discussion, then further proposals may be taken. These are then voted on and whichever one is passed becomes law until such time someone chooses to challenge it. So the school laws are forever in a state of evolution, reflecting the moods and attitudes of the community at any given moment.

Last term there was a lot of noise upstairs in the house after bedtime. Someone proposed there should be a later bedtime, a proposal that agitated me greatly, as at bedtime, after a long day, I have a solid half hour of dispensing hot chocolate, clean band-aids, medicines, and generally dealing with the kids last minute needs of the day. After that I have an hour or so to wind down before I go to bed myself. The thought of the bedtime being even later had me arguing desperately against the proposal.

The debate went on for ages, but because it was an issue of great importance to me it flashed by in what seemed like no time. However when the next case came up, about skateboarding downtown, it had no emotional content for me and it seemed to go on forever. Such is the way of self-government. (It is also noteworthy that in the case about bedtimes, many of the kids who would have got a later bedtime if that proposal had been passed, considered my position and voted against the proposal. It was dropped. So much for the 'Lord of the Flies' school of thought.

All laws go through the meeting except for certain health and safety laws and any other law which is mandatory in the eyes of the state. Decisions about which rooms people sleep in are made by the staff.

This is to avoid cliques of popular kids and ghettoes of unpopular kids forming. As these never develop, everyone becomes aware of each others qualities on a much broader basis, and a greater understanding of human differences permeates the community.

Staff also decide which kids should be accepted into the school, and if necessary, though thankfully this is very rare indeed, which kids should be told to leave. Having access to information, maybe about the home, or other relevant background knowledge, which the individual may not want exposed to the whole community, can make all the difference in such a decision.

Also in this area adult experience tends to make the most reliable barometer as there is more understanding of the issues at large beyond the immediate concerns of the community. This may not always be true though. The feelings of the

community as a whole are certainly deeply considered.

The meeting can vote to suspend someone, or to send them home before the end of term, and it can suggest to the staff that someone should be asked to leave, though again, this is a very rare event. The hiring of staff is also a staff decision, as background information relevant to the post may be difficult to assimilate and process by the community as a whole. However when the applicant visits the school the advice and opinions of the children are a primary contribution to the reaching of a decision.

Self-government then is a powerful current that guides our lives at Summerhill and gives the community shape and substance. The meetings are not lame affairs being overseen by benevolent adults, but are dynamic, animated affairs which put the power of our everyday living well and truly in the hands of the community.

Through self-government we are all the time learning to listen to each other, and to express our own needs in ways that are not detrimental to others. This applies as much to the adults in the community as to the kids. The weekly meetings provide the pulse that regulates the flow of community life.

There is much that the Judge and the Politician might learn from a Summerhill meeting. Listening to the Houses of Parliament on the radio, I am amazed at how well ordered and respectful our meetings are in comparison. Neill recognized that children were able to determine the course of their own lives. He saw his role as a spokesman for children, because the adult world would not listen to them, as a protector of children, because the adult world could not see them.

The source of the problem lay not in the children, but in the attitudes of adults towards them. There may have been some scene shifts since Neill's day, but the scenario is still basically the same.

Children are still not given the support and respect they deserve as living beings. A confused mixture of authority, bribery and seduction still keep the young under the thumb of the adult world, a world that has lost contact with its own living core and, as such, cannot comprehend the living as it presents itself in all its natural functioning.

Summerhill continues today, not in the shadow of one man, but by its inbuilt system of self-government, that does not allow the adult to have power over the child, but gives us the freedom to live side by side, and learn from each other what sort of world it is we want to live in.

The legacy that Neill left behind is a living one, not a sloughed off skin of empty sentiments.

An everyday story of school folk

"WHAT YOU WORRIED ABOUT?" said the boy standing next to me as we all walked into the play ground pretending not to be scared to death. I looked at him standing with his perfectly shaped tie and new pair of Doc Martins. Then I glanced down at my hurriedly assembled tie and trainers from last year (strictly forbidden).

A large teacher strode up on the platform and blew a whistle. Everyone stopped. He told us to go into the hall and sit down, and we did. While we were waiting the head of first year told us to be quiet (we weren't at Junior school now) and to stand when the head came in or out. It turns out we have to do this whenever he appears in whatever lesson.

Then he did arrive wearing one of those black robes and hats with the flat piece of board on top like you see in the *Bash Street Kids*. I find myself instantly not liking this man who puts the school in this sort of grip - school uniform - standing when he comes in - the man is a dictator.

Finally he stops going on about standards and how important it is to keep the good name of the school and walks out.

We spend the morning sorting out timetables with our form teacher. He gives us a test on them. Stupid! Why do we have timetables if he wants us to memorise the information anyway? After a few people have made a hash of theirs and he has repeated the process several times the bell goes and we shuffle out.

Science! A word to stike fear into the hearts of any pupil. A small chubby man hands out a list of rules and reads them. We copy them into our new science books. He seems to climb on the furniture of the classroom and get into very weird positions. He sticks his hands into places where they weren't meant to go.

If you do anything like sing or tap your pen he bites your head clean off.

Humanities! The teacher is an old battleaxe of a woman, hardened by ten years of teaching. She hands out work

sheets and walks off. At first we think nothing of it but when everyone is finished and walking around shouting and throwing things, you begin to worry.

The monster didn't return and when the bell went we went too.

P.E. We go to the gym and sit down. Teachers hand out P.E. timetables which are the most complicated things you have ever seen. No one understands them not even the teachers. This is all we do for the entire lesson.

Now it is time to go home.

Busses! We all line up in the correct line and go to the correct bus, but it doesn't work like that. You just go to a moving line and there is a huge amount of pushing and shoving but most people manage to get off at the right stop.

Well that was the first day. I think the teachers are more like police than teachers.

Now I've been here five months, science is as bad as ever, English is good. But don't get me wrong, I like school.

SNIPPETS

AT LAST, teachers' pay arrangements could soon be on a par with other professions because it looks as though the Government will establish a pay review body.

The surprise news, which first broke last week in the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* follows months of persistent lobbying by NASUWT at both national and constituency level.

Published by the National Association of Schoolmasters

and Union of Women Teachers,

The Government has announced its intention to renege on its own stated commitment to restore negotiating rights and instead is to make permanent the Interim Advisory Committee as a pay review body. The IAC will be changed in name only. This decision by the Government does not conform with international law. The Government is prepared to ignore the judgement of the International Labour Organisation and is refusing to implement the decisions of the ILO.

Published by the Membership and Communications Department, National Union of Teachers.

'I was a bit of a drop-out at school... but what I learnt at home from Britannica more than made up for it'

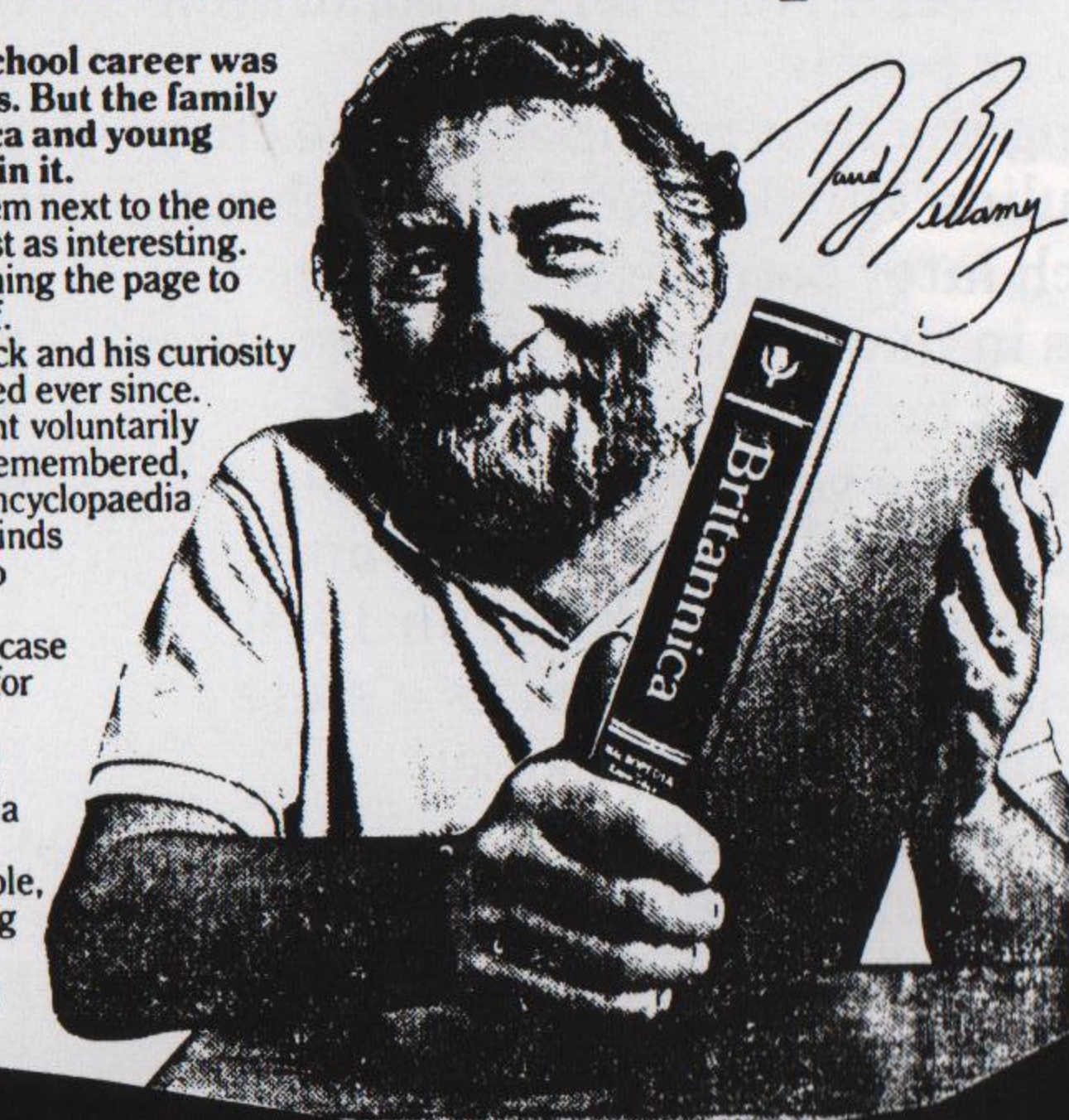
David Bellamy's early school career was not a resounding success. But the family owned a set of Britannica and young David looked things up in it.

The trouble was, the item next to the one he looked up was often just as interesting. And he couldn't resist turning the page to find out what was overleaf.

Somehow, the habit stuck and his curiosity has remained undiminished ever since. Lessons which are learnt voluntarily are those which are best remembered, which is why The New Encyclopaedia Britannica helps young minds to grow and older heads to stay young.

What is true in David's case could just as well be true for your own family.

TREASURE TROVE
The New Encyclopaedia Britannica is not only a treasure trove of remarkable, astounding and fascinating information, but also a complete home learning centre.



7. Physical Education and Games - Use of canes.

A serious incident recently at a County Primary school prompts me to remind Heads of the dangers of using canes for temporary hurdles or similar apparatus.

Avon County Council Education Department

HEALTH & SAFETY

Mime and movement

The Anna Scher Theatre in North London has built up a strong reputation for giving children a taste of participating in drama. Its founder talks to Graham Wade

ANNA SCHER is one of those rare people who has, through sheer determination and effort, achieved her own dream - in her case, the realisation of a theatre dedicated to developing young people's dramatic talent.

In any week, almost 1,000 students, mainly aged six to 16, will attend one of the many drama classes held after school and on Saturday. They come predominantly from Islington, where the theatre is based in a converted Baptist hall, not far from Chapel Market.

Each is asked to pay £1 towards the cost of a session, which lasts for an hour and a half. The annual budget - currently running at around 25,000 a year - also depends on grants from Islington Council, donations, agency fees and a variety of other sources.

The beginning

The original idea for the project came to Anna when she was an English and drama teacher at Ecclesbourne Junior School, off Essex Road, in the late 1960s. She began an after-school drama club for her pupils.

Among the first members of the club were Pauline Quirke and Linda Robson, who much later became well-known actresses in many television shows - the most recent being *Birds of a Feather*.

Quickly the venture grew too big for the school, moved to a local hall and ended up in its present home in 1976, when Anna gave up her job as a state school teacher to devote herself full-time to the theatre.

She explains her aims are twofold: "First, to develop talent. I really do feel like a creative catalyst in that sense, drawing out talent. Second, to supplement my pupils' general education - improvisation can do that wonderfully."

Freedom of speech

She is a firm believer in hard work. "I love to see people who have earned their success. Improvisation provides a wonderful vehicle for self-expression and creativity. I'm very strong on awareness - on civil rights, for instance. You may have noticed we have a picture of Martin Luther King at our entrance. We have total freedom of speech here."

Any child can put their name down to join the theatre, but often has to wait a long time to actually win a place. At the moment the waiting-list has about 2,000 names on it and some will have to

wait four years to get in.

"Our classes concentrate on improvisation, mime and movement. We're very strong on noticing here. We do an umbrella theme each term - like poetry in motion. This week the poem is Kipling's *If* and every week we have a Winston word - Churchill learnt a new word every day of his adult life."

Fast pace

Each class provides many opportunities for the students to improvise their own speeches and stories, both individually and in small groups. The pace is fast, with lots of openings for comment, explanation and discussion.

Anna says her teaching method has been used in many countries from Ireland to Israel and explains that the main influences on her own development include her convent education in Ireland, Judaism, the Protestant work ethic, and individuals she admires like Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi.

"My father also had a great influence. He was an incredibly authoritarian figure and I reacted against that. He was against me becoming an actress, wanting me to become a dentist like him. He insisted I gain a teacher's certificate before attempting the stage. I'm glad I became a teacher."

Feeling special

Born into a well-off Jewish family in Cork, Anna enjoyed her Catholic education. "I was always made to feel special at the convent, even though I was the only Jewish girl there. When I came to England at 14, to Hove in Sussex, I found it very unfriendly. I didn't know the rules at the grammar school and there was no-one to ask."

"It's one of the reasons I have a great empathy for the immigrant child, because I was one myself. I was Irish in England. Later I moved to London - to Trent Park College, and was much happier."

Countering -isms

She describes herself as an Irish Jewish integrationist whose teaching is aimed at countering any tendencies towards ageism, sexism or racism. "I've been very happy to be cast in the role of teacher, social worker and friend."

The theatre's classes are divided into four basic groups: junior (six to

eleven); secondary (eleven to 16); youth (16 to 21 plus); and the young professionals. Members of the last group are chosen by the theatre's staff.

"To get into our young professionals you have to have the three As: attendance, attitude and application. If your attendance is bad, you lose your place, because if you can't bother to turn up for an audition, you won't get a job."

"I'm very strong on that kind of discipline. I don't care whether the person has the lead part in *Grange Hill*, they must come to classes if they want their place," she stresses.

Track record

Although the success of the theatre shouldn't be judged on its ability to find parts in professional productions for its students, or the number who go on to become full-time actors, its track record in those departments is impressive.

Gary and Martin Kemp of Spandau Ballet, who played the Krays in the film of that title, Phil Daniels - the lead in the RSC's *Clockwork Orange*, Gillian Taylforth, Susan Tully and Judith Jacobs of *EastEnders*, and a huge proportion of *Grange Hill* actors - plus many others on stage and screen - owe their training to Anna Scher.

Regularly producers visit the theatre to hold auditions, but it's a firm rule that under-16s cannot be considered for commercials. Word soon spread about the cauldron of talent available after a BBC television producer called in the early days.

At first Anna decided to engage an outside agent to handle this work, but during her first visit to the agent's office he made a crude pass at her. She remembers the incident as being "very seedy".

Own agency

So her husband and collaborator, Charles Verrall, suggested they set up their own agency - and this has been running successfully ever since. It provides a valuable source of income to the theatre.

As well as teaching in the theatre, Anna is becoming involved in the World Family movement through which the theatre has sponsored a seven-year-old in Zimbabwe called Linnet Zikiti. The students contribute £144 a year to her village's education and health.

Anna also gives special courses for teachers from all over the world as well as appearing on television programmes



Anna Scher with students Colin Thomas and James Quashie

and advising production companies.

No respect

"The kind of feedback I get from the teachers I meet is that drama isn't given the respect it deserves in British state schools," she says.

Unfortunately, the Anna Scher Theatre is unique. The vast bulk of children have no opportunity of

participating in her brand of adventurous drama - as the huge volume of letters she receives from children all over the country complaining about the lack of facilities for drama testifies.

For those interested in following her method up, several books are available including: *100 Plus Ideas for Drama* (Heinemann Educational), *First Act*

Drama Kit (Ward Lock Education) and *Another 100 Plus Ideas for Drama* (Heinemann).

Some books may be available direct from the theatre. In first instance enquire to: Anna Scher, Anna Scher Theatre, 70-72 Barnsbury Road, London N1 0ES. Phone: 071-278 2101.

Anna concludes: "This theatre celebrates the oddball."

Winning with love and forgiveness

Family Pastimes

Co-operative board games from Canada available from *Family Pastimes*, RR 4, Perth, Ontario, Canada, K7H 3C6 (tel: 010-1-613-267-4819) or *Earthcare*, 33 Sadler St, Durham.

BOTH *Earth Game* and *Community* are co-operative board games for older children and adults.

Earth Game concerns the management and use of resources in order to solve emerging problems. The game is won "when Spaceship Earth's problems are solved".

Initially the rules were difficult to follow (and the lack of a breakdown of the colour-coded pieces meant that we played the game without realising 4 pieces were missing until it proved impossible to 'win' at all!) but, once au fait, the game was interesting and fun to play.

Although the problems which players face, either individually or as a group, are problems which exist, for instance, famine and war, the game still felt somewhat abstract.

However, used well with specific case studies it would be a very useful

addition to any programme concerning world problems.

Community is about developing a happy, complete village with the Meeting Hall as the heart of the community. Bad feelings are resolved with love and forgiveness. Although this seemed at times somewhat contrived, the discussions about the desirability and priorities of some 'developments' which it generated were stimulating and worthwhile.

The board, printed in two colours only, was difficult to read due to the colour scheme and the smallness of the print.

The necessary constant readjustment of scores for bad feelings, love and forgiveness and money became a chore as the game wore on, and this complexity was the reason that *Earthcare*, the only UK retailer of games by Family Pastimes, gave for not stocking it.

Once again, the packaging of the games was not very attractive, and it would be hard for them to compete (?) with other more commercial games. But both would be useful resources in any classroom.

Magic

The Changeover

A novel by Margaret Mahy
Methuen Teens, £1.95

AN OLD corrupt antique dealer, Carmody Braque, is remorselessly draining the life from young Jacko Chant. He gained power over the boy by means of a trick and is now taking his life force to revitalise himself, something he has done many times before.

The only way he can be prevented from finally killing Jacko is if Laura, the boy's sister, undergoes the Changeover and becomes a witch. Only then will she be able to destroy the creature that is preying on her brother.

Margaret Mahy has written a superb supernatural thriller. As usual her characters are marvellously realised, and the troubled relationship between Laura and the strange Sorrenson Carlisle is sympathetically portrayed.

This gripping book, with its strong female characters and its women's magic is an absolute must. Mahy is an accomplished writer who seldom puts a foot wrong. Give her a try.

Discover the falls

Soul Daddy

A novel by Jacqueline Roy
Collins, pp223, £6.95

HANNAH and Rosie are teenage sisters, the daughters of a white mother and black father who they have never known. They live with their mother in a comfortable white middle class suburb.

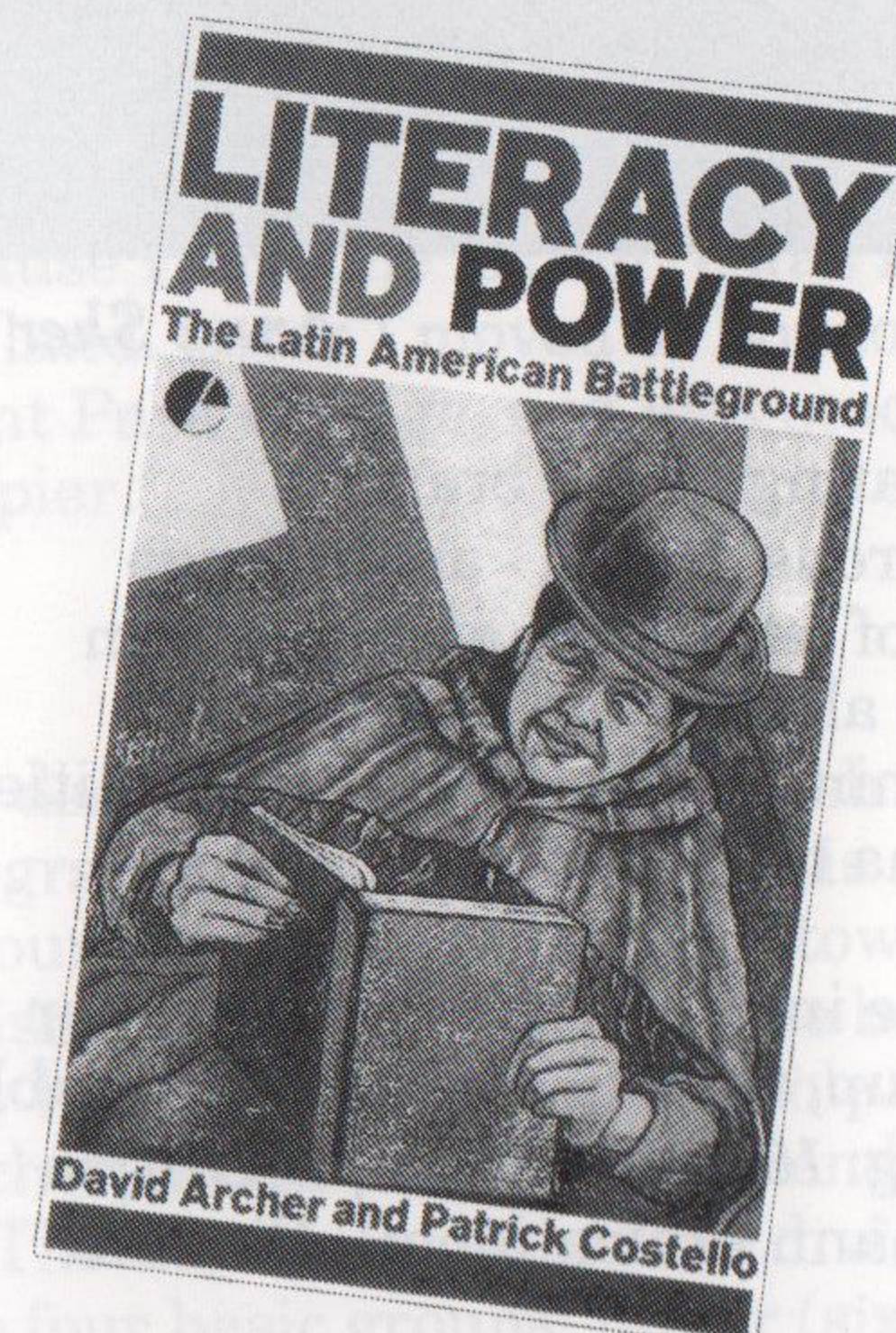
Suddenly, their lives are disrupted by the return of their rock star father, Joe Delaney, with his daughter from another relationship, Nicola, on tour. How are the twins going to cope?

Jacqueline Roy takes this rather unpromising storyline and turns it into an excellent novel.

With wit and sensitivity, she explores the problems of growing up, of being a twin ("It was more like being halved than doubled"), of family life ("If Rosie's favourite game was Happy Families, Hannah's choice of entertainment was Marital Strife").

The twins are shown becoming aware of their blackness for the first time. In a marvellous scene Hannah joins with Nicola in challenging a teacher's claim that Livingstone discovered the Victoria Falls!

Jacqueline Roy is an author to watch out for.



Literacy and power

A book by David Archer and Patrick Costello
Earthscan, pp206, £8.95

THE OFTEN bloody struggles of Central America have dominated news reports for a long time. Behind the headlines lies an enormous population of the desperately poor, and it is axiomatic that they are rendered even more powerless by widespread illiteracy.

What actually counts as literacy is less clear. Archer and Costello describe some of the most exciting and innovative programmes designed to overcome the problem and how, as they worked with many of them, they discovered how varied and controversial they are.

El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Ecuador, Mexico, Chile, Bolivia and Guatemala are all included, and for each country the authors have provided a thrilling account of the lives and

circumstances of the people who both teach and learn, as well as describing the varied forms that literacy teaching, even literacy itself, can take.

This book is not only about literacy, but is also a guide to the societies of one of the world's most troubled regions.

It's now not never

EDUCATION NOW numbers 8, 9 and 10

A bi-monthly magazine
published by Education Now

EDUCATION Now was founded in 1988 as a co-operative publishing company to put forward constructive ideas at a time of widespread disillusionment amongst educationalists. This was in the climate of suppression of debate leading up to the Education Reform Act of 1988. Education Now published a number of books and a bi-monthly magazine.

The magazine's editorial team believes that parents, teachers and all those concerned with education need to be refreshed by reading about the more hopeful side of educational developments.

There has been much concentration on the disturbing difficulties being experienced in the present scene, but, for *Education Now*, very real and constructive opportunities exist.

Early issues of the magazine looked at successful innovations such as City-As-School in the USA where young people gain their education together with experience of the real world

through a series of supported and negotiated work experience assignments in the community.

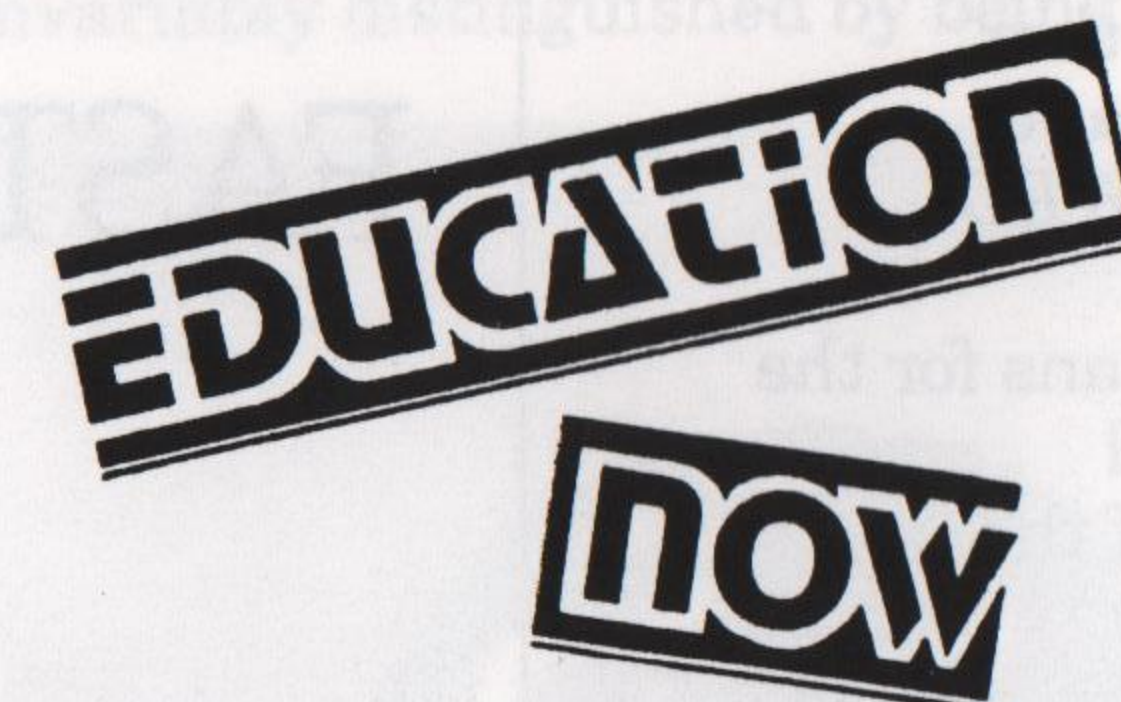
The advantages to be gained by re-organising vast, monolithic schools as federations of human-scale Minischools and the applicability in this country of the Danish system whereby the government provides 85% of the running costs of local schools started by

As far as Home-based education is concerned *Education Now* 8 makes it clear that parents are increasingly availing themselves of the clause in the Education Act of 1944, which enables them to be responsible for the education of their children "otherwise" than by full-time attendance at school.

Concerning Minischooling *Education Now* 9 and 10 indicate that by managing vast units as if they were clusters of small schools on one or several sites, restores wholeness and meaning to the students' and teachers' experience of education.

The management variables of Time, Territory, Teachers, Things and the Thinking and planning processes that go into the curriculum are placed within the power of the teaching and learning unit in a complex of small learning areas served by tutorial teams supported by a central management team.

The magazines are a thoroughly good read and useful handbooks for anyone interested in exploring new ideas in education. They are available from the editorial office of the magazine, see our contacts page.



parents and teachers were also considered by the magazine.

The most recent issues of the magazine, numbers 8, and 9 and 10 (a double issue) look respectively at Home-based education and the practicalities of Minischooling.

Back Issues Offer

Now in its 23rd year, *Lib ED* is the only chronicle of practical and theoretical developments in radical education -- if you've just caught up with us, catch up with what you've missed. Each back issue is yours for 75p (inc. p&p) (*Lib ED*s 11 to 14 are £1 and number 15 is £1.30) but for only £9 you can have the complete set of back issues in print. At present that's Volume 2, numbers 2 and 4 to 15. We can also supply photocopies of articles published in all out-of-print issues of *Libertarian Teacher* / *Education* / *Lib ED*. Please send a stamped addressed envelope for full details.

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- 15 SPECIAL: Visions of the future: Young people tell us about their hopes and aspirations (£1.30)

Don't miss the next issue...

The next issue of *Lib ED* will be a double issue (numbers 17/18) and will be published in October. Major features planned include: Children and War; Child Sexual Abuse and School Policies; and a portrait of a Small School. Why not subscribe to ensure that you don't miss this or any of the following issues. Our ordinary year's sub costs £3 (inland), £6 (EEC), or US\$12 (elsewhere). But see below for other attractive packages. Fill in the subscription form, write a cheque and post it to us TODAY!

Join the Network

The *Lib ED* network is an informal network of people with an interest in libertarian education. By joining you will get even more information on what is going on in Britain and around the world than we can fit into the magazine. Network members receive the following:

National Contact List -- a listing of individuals in the network, so that people can get in touch with each other.

A regular bulletin -- published in March, July and November to keep you in touch between issues of *Lib ED* magazine. This always includes...

An Information Exchange -- news, articles, plans for the next issue of the magazine, a listing of meetings and conference dates, and so on, provided by members of the network.

Access to an Information Service -- *Lib ED* has a huge amount of information on the libertarian education movement. Network members are welcome to write or phone for information.

A Network subscription costs £6 (inland), £9 (EEC) or \$18 (elsewhere).

SPREAD THE WORD

We don't have a large scale system to distribute *Lib ED* around the world. We rely very much on a small network of SUPPORTERS who take the magazine to conferences, meetings and into bookshops.

So why not join them and become a SUPPORTER. We will send you, as well as your subscription copy, the network bulletins and an extra 5 copies of each issue which you can pass onto friends and colleagues (you could even sell them!) In this way, we hope that more and more people will be encouraged to subscribe.

It could change a lot of people's attitudes to education.

A Supporter's subscription costs £18 (inland).

Special offer!

All SUPPORTERS will receive a copy of the recently published *Free School: The White Lion Experience* by Nigel Wright ABSOLUTELY FREE OF CHARGE!

SUB OFFER!

Although we have had to increase *Lib ED*'s cover price due to ever increasing costs, we will accept subscriptions and re-subscriptions at the old rates, published here, until the end of September 1991. You will then receive the double issue 17/18 and then issue 19. So HURRY, get your sub in soon.

The NEW D-I-Y Guide

Lib ED publishes a book giving a wealth of information on libertarian education, a comprehensive bibliography, extensive contact addresses and a number of articles explaining the ideas. This guide is undergoing substantial revision and will be published soon.

Overseas subscribers please note: we will accept the equivalent in any overseas banknotes, otherwise please send a bank draft in sterling.

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FAST FORWARD FOR FREEDOM

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Leire, Leicester, LE17 5HL.**

Pilot of the future

The Dan Dare Dossier

A book by Norman Wright and Mike Higgs

Hawk Books, £14.95

THIS LAVISH volume celebrates forty years of that archetypal British comic strip hero, Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future. It includes a potted history of the strip, details about the artists, story reprints and a mass of miscellaneous information relating to what can be usefully called the Dan Dare industry.

The authors have obviously aimed it at the, by now, middle aged readers of the original strip, and make clear that they regard developments in British comics over the last fifteen years or so with some distaste.

Dan Dare first appeared in April 1950, in the new *Eagle* comic that was founded by the Reverend Marcus Morris of the Society for Christian Publicity. Morris originally had a hero called Lex Christian in mind, but in the event the Dan Dare character, created and drawn by Frank Hampton was chosen as the mainstay of the comic.

It was to be a tremendous success.

The Dan Dare strip not only ensured the success of the *Eagle*, but went on to spawn its own merchandising industry. There were Dan Dare water pistols and toy guns, board games, jigsaw puzzles, walkie-talkie sets, toy figures, film strips, watches, drinking mugs, even glove puppets. Radio Luxembourg even featured a successful Dan Dare radio programme.

The character and his adventures clearly captured the imagination of a large number of boys in the 1950s. Here was a clean-cut, very English, very public school hero, brave, respectful towards authority, decent and honourable.

Week after week he fought for freedom against a variety of exotic foes, the best remembered being the Mekon. Within the strip's imaginary universe, Britain was still Great, and the Empire

was miraculously transformed into a benevolent concern for lesser breeds and projected out into the Galaxy.

Here Dare, with his comic working class subordinate Digby, not only defended the Earth against attack, but also freed various alien races from oppression.

Those to be helped were almost invariably distinguished by being of a

for a short while in the more working class *Lion* comic, before he too was abandoned.

Subsequently efforts were made to revive him, first in *2000AD*, and later in a new relaunched *Eagle*. Both these attempts featured a new Dare who had been updated in an attempt to fit in with contemporary tastes, although without much success.

This was a period when, the authors complain, it was often not possible in many comics to tell who were the goodies and who were the baddies. Certainly this was, one suspects, how many comic readers saw the world, and those comics which reflected this were successful, the best example being *2000AD*.

What of Dan Dare today?

The *Eagle* still features a Dare strip as its main story, and has returned to the original character, chin and all. The storylines are reasonably contemporary though.

At the time of writing, Dan, Digby and Peabody are trapped underground by giant insects and earthworms mutated by dumped nuclear waste!

The best comment on the Dan Dare phenomenon is, however, not noticed in the *Dossier*. This was the Dan Dare story written by Grant Morrison and drawn by Rian Hughes for the shortlived *Revolver* comic.

Here Dare is a retired, crippled veteran, made cynical use of to help keep a reactionary Tory Government, headed by a woman Prime Minister, in power. He is forced to confront the past (he killed defenceless women and children in the war on Venus) and the present (the Government has had

Peabody murdered) by Digby, who is in this story a member of the resistance.

Dare discovers to his horror that the Government's resettlement scheme for the unemployed involves handing them over to the Treen dictatorship on Venus where they are fed to a giant organic computer.

This was very much the Dan Dare for the Thatcher era.



different colour! Looking back, the stories can be seen as very much reflecting the liberal middle class attitudes of the time, that is to say patronising rather than downright reactionary.

The strip, as the authors lament, began to lose its hold on its readers in the course of the 1960s, with the *Eagle* finally folding in 1969. Dare continued

Suffer the little children

Child Slaves

A book by Peter Lee-Wright
Earthscan Publications, £6.95

IN *Child Slaves*, Peter Lee-Wright provides an appalling catalogue of suffering and abuse, oppression and exploitation, that is absolutely staggering.

He brings home powerfully and graphically the full extent of the disaster that has engulfed the Third World and its children... and the extent to which Western Capitalism profits from and is responsible for the crisis:

...the current net outflow of funds from the Third World to the richer 'developed' countries is running at \$43 billion a year, according to the World Bank, whose policies are largely responsible...

The debt and interest payments for sub-Saharan African countries in the year 1988-9 exceeded half the region's export earnings. Throughout most of Africa and Latin America, average incomes have fallen by 10 per cent to 25 per cent in the 1980s... Among a battery of such facts, UNICEF reports that:

"For almost nine hundred million people approximately one-sixth of mankind, the march of human progress has become a retreat... It can be estimated that at least half a million young children have died in the last twelve months as a result."

Half a million children!

Lee-Wright focuses on the plight of children throughout the Third World and in particular on child workers, many of whom work in conditions that approximate to slavery.

He looks in some detail at the situation in nine countries: India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Brazil, Thailand, Portugal, Turkey, the Philippines and Mexico. His case studies bring the problem home in human terms.

In India, two hours from Delhi, in the city of Moradabad, eight-year-old Mustafa works in a brass foundry. He cannot remember how long he has worked there, but it is over a year. He is paid 3 rupees (about 12 pence) a day.

According to Lee-Wright, perhaps as many as 80,000 children work in the city's brass industry, producing brass ware, much of which is for export to the West.

He describes children working, exhausted, into Saturday evening: "There are no regular hours, they

work until the boss says they can go home. They get no overtime." They were working on a Christmas order for candlesticks, bowls and ashtrays, all enamelled with a holly motif, for an American company.

On to a town in Brazil. Here some 35,000 people, a third of them children are employed in the footwear industry. Lee-Wright visited one factory that employed over a hundred children, working a nine and a half hour day, five days a week, plus large amounts of overtime.

Many children are affected by the long hours and bad conditions, with exposure to glue vapour being blamed for high levels of anaemia, leukaemia and respiratory difficulties by the union and its medical advisors. He writes:

One young girl was packing summer casuals for C & A; another boy was sticking labels on the boxes of sandals for Stead and Simpson. This latter was already marked £9.99 a pair, cheap for England, but nearly a whole month's wages for those on "half a minimum salary".

Stead and Simpson are part of the British Shoe Corporation, who also own other well-known High Street retailers such as Dolcis and Saxone. They are also Britain's biggest shoe importer and the name which cropped up in every factory we visited.



Seventy-five per cent of shoes sold in Britain now come from abroad, and it is likely that the majority of them have been made with child labour.

Alongside this economic exploitation of the children of the Third World is their increasing sexual exploitation.

Lee-Wright exposes the use made by Western and Japanese tourists of the readily available male and female child prostitutes, particularly in Thailand and the Philippines, countries opened up for sexual exploitation by the US military presence.

This is, as he puts it, the final stage of colonial corruption, having taken over the land, stripped it of its natural resources, restructured its economy to serve the developed world, they then rape the women and children.

There are organised Western paedophile groups that are taking advantage of Third World children to rape and, on occasions, even murder. There is, it seems, very little that is not done to the poor.

Lee-Wright presents an absolutely relentless picture of suffering, oppression and exploitation, and is categoric about the part that Western capitalism plays in this gigantic crime.

He is to be unreservedly congratulated for bringing this catalogue of horrors to our notice. Everybody will learn something from this book. What is the solution, however?

Evidently, Western shareholders in the multinationals must be persuaded to get their companies to use their power and influence to end child slavery. While the social conditions he portrays are worse than Victorian, his solution is positively Dickensian.

A kindly capitalist will come along to save these millions of lost boys and girls a la *Oliver Twist*. This is really rather a pathetic solution compared with the scale of the horror that he has revealed.

Moreover, one suspects that Lee-Wright is at least half aware of how unlikely this scenario is. No, the only answer is an old one that has perhaps been out of fashion for a while in the West: revolution.

There can be no reliance on mythical benevolent shareholders. Might as well hope that tigers will give up eating meat! Only the efforts of the poor to organise themselves and advance their own interests will answer.

Meanwhile conditions throughout the Third World continue to worsen...

Noddy fudge

Hurrah for Little Noddy

one of a series of books by Enid Blyton
republished by Macdonald, £3.50

"IF YOU read the original books carefully," said the daughter of Enid Blyton on Radio 4's usually excellent *Woman's Hour*, "you will see that in the originals the golliwogs have some quite strong roles. For instance the garage attendant... and (my mother) didn't live in today's world..."

Enid Blyton was opposed to updating the Noddy series of books. From looking at the Macdonald reissue in its self-styled non-racist and

old Noddy, he knows how to treat an assertive girl.

Noddy is really happy to be wage slave to the little doll with the curly golden hair and blue eyes, who lives at the Four Chimney House (a little Miss Margaret Hilda Roberts?), and accept her cast-offs to furnish his house. She is the *REAL* woman.

They used to be black golliwogs, now they are goblins, a sort of unspecified underclass or ethnic minority who live in Goblin Village. It would be so easy for kids, and many adults, to see this as a symbol for Broadwater Farm, Argies, Iraqis or your nearest run-down area.



non-sexist version, one may feel inclined to agree, but for different reasons.

Macdonald must have had a problem. Noddy is an industry; a big name (60,000,000 books sold). A tarnished image because of the black, bad gollies and the lack of positive roles for girls -- but still a household name with huge profit potential.

This edition may in some ways be more racist than the old ones. The black gollies have been erased, so now black people have no real presence in the books at all. The soldiers, the police and the principal characters are not only white, but have strawberry and cream complexions.

Amongst the children portrayed in the group pictures, there is one black girl who silently creeps onto the edges of the pages as a crowd filler. The new "boy and girl dolls from different cultures" claimed by the publishers seem to be represented by figures such as an elephant with slanted eyes.

The new 'tomboy' character, Martha Monkey, specially written in to redress the sexism, is a bonus. But our hero's reaction when she jokes with him is to turn the hose pipe on her so that she runs off crying down the street. Good

The goblins are evil because they are goblins. They steal cars, trap Noddy in a wood, steal all his clothes and get people into trouble. As a result it is quite legitimate for the police to chase them with a dog, and stuff them into a sack with no questions asked as to whether they are guilty or innocent.

They are the depersonalised class enemy, who must be hunted into their lair and punished at all costs, so that the ghetto of Toyland, from which at first Noddy himself is nearly excluded because he is suspected of being a mere ornament, may function smoothly.

What about some positive black, or even goblin, central characters? They could have done so much more to make an icon that would have been so powerful so much more acceptable with so little effort.

Macdonald, and their author Stella Maidment, who 'modernised' the series, have missed a great opportunity. "Parents who loved Noddy as children won't even notice," she said. That is the problem.

They may have excised the word "gay", but "Noddy and his Magic Rubber" may excite more curiosity than before, especially in the USA.

They never learn

Dear Lib ED

I've been enjoying the *Raven* on education, reviewed in *Lib ED* 15.

In the article looking at the development of a national system of education I was especially intrigued with the importance given by the state to provision of education in connection with military needs. Little has changed has it? When the UN deadline passed and the bombing started I felt as if I'd been kicked back to square one - remember we started here in 1940 when the so-called Hitler war started... and now 50 years on here we are again. It's all so very sad.

John Aitkenhead
Kilquhanity School

Exchange 1

Hello!

We are a free school in Vienna, Austria, and have been going since 1977. Our group consists of 25 students aged 10-15 and 5 people who offer the various courses. In addition to these five we also have the skills and interests of various parents and artists, who offer courses in their various fields.

We're writing to you in order to make contact with a Free School in Britain. This contact might take on a number of different forms: an exchange of information and ideas helping towards a networking among Free Schools; the exchange of letters between students, both for fun and to make their language learning more tangible; and ultimately to arrange exchange trips between our two schools.

Please write back soon.

All the best

Ben Grafton

Jurgen Burgermeister
Schulerschule, WUK, 1090 Wien,
Wahringerstrasse 59, Austria.

Exchange 2

Dear Lib ED

THE T-i-e-S (for Teachers' Home Exchange and Students International Exchange) is a French based non-profit organisation run by teachers exclusively for teachers offering options including: holiday home exchanges; exchange visits between colleagues; holiday/linguistic exchanges; exchange of teaching posts.

We have decided to offer a discount subscription fee of £20 instead of the normal fee to the subscribers of *Lib ED*. Please send your magazine envelope bearing your name as proof of subscription to THE TieS, 6 avenue des Lilas, 64000 PAU, France.

Yours sincerely
Michel BARRERE
President of the Association